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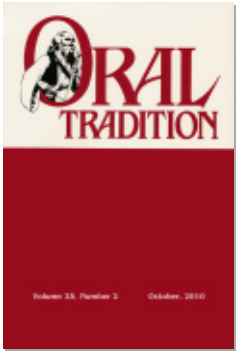

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Introduction and Overview

While a very early version of "Cinderella," printed in China in the ninth century, has been known to the world since the translations and commentary by R. D. Jameson (1932) and Arthur Waley (1947 and 1963), there has been no extended analysis of this Tang Dynasty text in the light of its Asian religious, historical, and literary contexts. The story of a young girl, Yexian, appeared in the miscellany of the Tang Dynasty Duan Chengshi (c. 800-63) (Reed 2003:3-5). Upon examination, the Yexian narrative is remarkably close to the story made most famous by the Frenchman Charles Perrault (1697) and the 1950 Walt Disney cartoon. A mistreated stepdaughter is kind to an animal; at the moment she is bereft of hope, an otherworldly person appears out of the blue; a marvelous dress for a festival and a shining lost shoe lead to identification through the fit of the shoe and marriage to a king (see Appendix A for a translation of the Yexian story).[1] Despite the fact that the Cinderella and Yexian stories are parallel in spirit and series of motifs, recent scholars interested in the story's diffusion, such as Graham Anderson, disregard the Asian roots of the story, and instead trace a few motifs back to other stories told by Greeks about Egyptians (Anderson 2000 and 2003). While the Tang Dynasty text adds a highly unusual fish with red fins and golden eyes to the story famous in the West, Yexian herself demonstrates familiar character traits: she is hardworking, virginal, kind, lonely, wishful, and willful. It is time for this heroine's Asian identity to be recognized and the evocative story motifs understood in their Asian contexts.

Focusing on Duan Chengshi's c. 850 CE text, this paper starts with the hypothesis that Yexian's story reflects the time and place of the informant, Li Shiyuan, cited by Duan. I concentrate on Li Shiyuan's possible identity as a member of the Zhuang ethnic group in Nanning, Guangxi Province, now within the People's Republic of China near the Vietnamese border. Victor Mair's 2005 translation and footnotes stimulated my interest in Guangxi, and

[1] The motifs I have listed here define Aarne-Thompson Type 510A of "Cinderella" versions, as will be explained later in this paper. Arthur Waley's translation is given in Appendix A; I have annotated that translation with some alternate interpretations given by Victor Mair, R. D. Jameson, and Carrie Reed. My intent in providing this translation is to help the reader follow my paper, but I do not attempt a variorum transcript, which would consistently give all the different word choices discussed in my paper.

Katherine Kaup, who studies contemporary Zhuang politics, enabled me to interview Zhuang folklore scholars in Nanning. With some observations in Guangxi Province, but more importantly analysis of literary texts and previous scholarship, I place the Yexian story in the context of Zhuang beliefs, creativity, and history.

Even in a preliminary study into Yexian's Asian origins, however, it is not sufficient to explore one subgroup; the Zhuang lived at a crossroads in the ninth century, absorbing and resisting Hindu and Buddhist influences from South and Southeast Asia, and Han Chinese political and cultural dominance from the north and east. Particularly in the Tang Dynasty, well established trade routes connected India, Southeast Asia, and East Asia, and ideas were exchanged along with silk and other material goods. The resonances in this c. 850 story of Hindu, Buddhist, and Han Chinese narratives, as well as local concerns, help to explain the story's symbolic power and ability to adapt to different world areas. The Yexian story is a composite of at least two narrative lines: one emphasizes the fish rescued by Yexian, and the other focuses on an untidy being who rescues the girl at a time of anguish. Both narrative strands have Hindu and Buddhist analogues.

The question then arises whether the Yexian story could have been completely composed almost anywhere with access to Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Could it, for example, have arisen in India, Vietnam, Java, Tibet? Could Li Shiyuan simply be a conduit to Duan Chengshi? Since the Zhuang have crossed many borders, formation of the story in Vietnam is quite possible. There are also smaller distinctive ethnic groups within Guangxi such as the Dong, Yao, and Miao. My focus, however, is to understand the complexity of Zhuang ethnicity in the Tang Dynasty. The evidence I present does not support the conclusion that the story arrived on the shores of China complete as a ship in a bottle. The red color of Yexian's fish, for example, ties the story to Zhuang need and innovation during the Tang Dynasty in Guangxi when the raising of red fish literally rescued the Zhuang.

It is also necessary to examine the story in the context of Han Chinese narratives. Collectors of folklore, specifically Chinese folklore, often make up data about informants. Duan Chengshi, the Han Chinese collector, theoretically could have created this story from scratch or he could have added to the story any of its elements. Red carp today are a symbol of good luck throughout China and the Chinese diaspora; to the extent that Hindu and Buddhist narratives were accessible to the Zhuang in ninth-century Nanning, they were theoretically accessible to Duan. To consider the many possibilities of Duan Chengshi's contributions to the story, my approach has been to examine Chinese literature, art, and religious practices before, during, and after the ninth century. A basic reference point is Duan's miscellany, now accessible through Carrie Reed's introductions, translations, and annotations (2001, 2003).[2]

Looking at Chinese narratives earlier in the same century, I compare the Yexian story to that of an extremely popular 807 CE romantic poem describing the Tang Dynasty Yang Guifei, who rose in a "rags to riches" fashion to become the favorite consort of an emperor. One could

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[2] For their time and expertise, I thank Katherine Kaup and Carrie Reed for reading early drafts of this paper; Victor Mair, for generously acting as my informal mentor for two years; Robert Goldman and Sally Sutherland Goldman for agreeing to come to my college to lead a faculty workshop on the *Ramayana* and for answering my many questions; and Roberta Adams and Ellen Harold for steadfastly coming up with sources and ideas.

also explore resonances in the Han Chinese Daoist tradition before 800 CE, such as images of water and women in the Daodejing, the philosopher Zhuangzi's famous reference to the happiness of fish, and the utopian "Peach Blossom Spring" by Tao Qian (372-427 CE).

My research, however, has found that stories and traditions that develop in China *after* the ninth century are much more closely affiliated with the Yexian story than literature before it. For example, relatively soon after Duan's publication there are many stories describing a magical, kind, and poor girl who wants a husband and carries a fishbasket; statues of this "Fishbasket Bodhisattva" start appearing at the end of the tenth century at the same time as the spread of domesticated goldfish and Buddhist Ponds of Mercy where small red fish are released. In the sixteenth century, the *Journey to the West* was published with key anecdotes that are very similar to the Yexian story: the famous monkey-king is relegated to guarding fruit trees but runs off in disguise to a forbidden glamorous party; a small red fish grows to be a water dragon-king.

In Appendix C, I offer a summary of reasons to conclude that the Yexian story reflects Tang Dynasty Zhuang creativity, culture, and interaction with other Asian cultures. Even Anderson reflects the growing consensus that the "Cinderella" story exists around the world due to diffusion, not "polygenesis," a term akin to old ideas about universal archetypes developed by Carl Jung and promulgated by Joseph Campbell. The issue of diffusion is important in understanding global interaction; this particular story has tremendous influence on people's assumptions about ethics and life's possibilities, especially for women. Champions of any alternative source should not merely point to one or two motifs such as an eagle dropping a shoe onto a Pharaoh's lap, but be able to discuss how those motifs resonated in society. While Duan's printed story and its oral variants in sixteenth-century China could have led directly to the European versions, study of the variants recorded after 1500 is largely beyond the scope of this paper.[3] Instead, I hope my work leads others to develop further interpretations of the c. 850 story in its Asian contexts. To avoid Western ethnocentrism, should not this story at least be called the Yexian/Cinderella story?

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[3] Fairy tale collections, including "Cinderella" in many variants, began appearing in Europe in the sixteenth century. I suggest later in this paper that these collections appeared with European merchants, Jesuit priests, and sailors bringing stories to Italy from Asia. Duan's miscellany was never lost; it was printed and popular in China in the sixteenth century. To the question of how the story got from China to Europe, I would repeat Phil Ochs' 1968 answer to the question of how to get out of Vietnam: by boat. Italy with its great ports seems to be the country where the European fairytale tradition begins with Gion Francesco Straparola, c. 1550, and Giambattista Basile, c. 1634 (Zipes 2001:vii). For many with a Western perspective, my speculation about transmission might be the most interesting or highly contested, but I hope to move the focus from Europe to Asia.

Even though Walt Disney credits Charles Perrault's version of the Cinderella story at the beginning of his famous cartoon, some aspects of his film seem to capture the spirit of Yexian's story more closely than most Western versions. For instance, Disney humanizes a mouse, Gus, much as Yexian's pet fish is humanized; Cinderella frees Gus as spontaneously and naturally as Yexian rescues the tiny fish. While Gus keeps escaping the fate of being eaten by the stepmother's cat, Yexian's friendly fish is eaten by the stepmother herself. Yexian is found with her arms around a tree; the animated Cinderella rushes out of the house to weep under a large, beautifully drawn tree. I do not ascribe these resemblances to the collective unconscious and universal archetypes; these theories deny the original contributions from Asia and halt interest in pursuing Asian interpretations. Instead, I offer the thought that Disney was somewhat of a scholar of folklore and that he might very well have read Arthur Waley's 1947 article translating and commenting upon Duan Chengshi's Yexian story before working on the cartoon in 1949.

A Brief Review of Research into Versions of "Cinderella"

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries interest in the origins of the "Cinderella" story was intense. By 1893 the work of European folklorists enabled Marian Roalfe Cox to categorize more than 350 collected variants including Indic and Vietnamese analogues. In 1932 R. D. Jameson brought attention to the version written in classical Chinese seven hundred years before any European record. Jameson used Cox's work to trace resemblances to Vedic, Egyptian, and Greek myths. In 1947 Arthur Waley published an article with a new translation and interpretations of the wording. In the 1950s Anna Birgitta Rooth analyzed 700 versions and concluded that dissemination was from the Middle East to Europe with perhaps a Chinese genesis since she knew the c. 850 version; after the 1961 Aarne-Thompson index, the sequence of motifs listed in my first paragraph became known as Type 510A as opposed to other closely related stories labeled Cat-skin or Cap o' Rushes versions; the variants existed in Asia, the Middle East, and Europe by the late nineteenth century (see Dundes 1982:vii-ix for charts and excerpts of the research of Rooth and Aarne-Thompson).

In 1974 Nai-Tung Ting analyzed approximately thirty "Cinderella" stories that had been collected from Han-Chinese, "Chuang" [Zhuang], Yi, Miao, Tibetan, Uigur, Korean, Cham, and Khmer informants in China and "Indo-China" in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These stories depart significantly from the Type 510A story, for example by having a sequel where the heroine dies or by emphasizing rivalry with a sister who is "pockmarked." Stories collected in North Vietnam in the twentieth century are the closest to the c. 850 Yexian version; they also feature fish, whereas other versions in China feature a cow or an ox. Ting (9) considers the "Viet" and Zhuang one "ethnic complex" and does not distinguish among the many North Vietnamese ethnic groups. While the national border between Vietnam and the People's Republic of China is now significant, in the ninth century forces from the capital in Chang'an (Xi'an) sought to secure the larger area within the Chinese sphere of influence. Ting tentatively concludes that the "Cinderella" story may have "risen first in the South Kwangsi [Guangxi] and North Vietnam region . . . although it was probably preceded by a rich tradition reaching back to antiquity" (39).

In 2005 Victor Mair ascribed Yexian's story to "fiercely independent non-Sinitic peoples" (362); his introduction and footnotes hint at origins in Roman, Anatolian, Syrian, Indian, Persian, Dvaravati, Mergui Archipelago, Middle East, and Thai sources, with routes across the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and/or South China Sea. Mair builds upon Ting's references to the Zhuang, specifically detailing women's embroidery and the making of shoes, but his 2005 footnotes were based on linguistic analysis, not on direct knowledge of Zhuang culture in and around Nanning (Mair 2007).

This article goes beyond Ting's and other scholars' work in a number of ways. It presents how the Zhuang in 2007 expressed ownership of the story, how they interpreted the motifs, and how the story's details reflect Zhuang traditions in ninth-century Guangxi, based on other sources. Further, this article explores Indic sources that the Zhuang had access to, specifically in the ninth century, and suggests that the Hindu/Buddhist contexts are significantly important to the genesis of the story. Finally, it recognizes the information available about the collector Duan Chengshi and explores the elements in the story of likely Han Chinese derivation, whether

supplied by Duan in writing down the story or because the Zhuang had absorbed Han Chinese culture before the story's creation. The intent is not only to discern the different Asian strands within the story, but to appreciate the story's evocative power. In comparison to dozens of variants I have read from around the world, this c. 850 version stands out because of the tender beauty and humanity of the fish, Yexian's sorrow when the fish is killed and eaten, her isolation, her ability to out-trick her stepmother, her astonishing blue dress and golden shoes, and the positive end, where she becomes a king's first wife.

I hope my own article stimulates specialists in various fields and languages to develop, refine, and correct my evidence and conclusions, but more importantly I hope this article brings attention to the vision of the world offered by the Zhuang, even if only a utopia that disappears as a trail of peach blossoms floating on water.

Han-Chinese/Zhuang Interaction

Han Chinese and Zhuang are both problematic terms because they are categories encompassing large complex entities changing over time, yet they are useful because a distinction between two ethnic communities frames the Yexian story. The text begins with a reference to Yexian's father described with the Chinese characters that translate as a "Yongzhou cave-dweller" (Reed 2001:113). The text ends with Duan describing his informant Li Shiyuan using the same term, "cave-dweller," which has been less literally translated to mean an ethnic group. Victor Mair renders the description of Li Shiyuan as a "servant of my [Duan's] household and originally the member of a tribal community in Yongzhou (2005:366)." He identifies Yongzhou as "modern Nanning in the province of Guangxi . . . home of China's largest 'minority,' the Zhuang" (367).[4]

One has to begin with a skeptical attitude toward Duan Chengshi's statements. Duan Chengshi credited many stories with an ambiguous geographical location. In his miscellany, one fanciful story ostensibly concerns an envoy who travels toward Silla, but readers cannot assume they are learning anything reliable about this Korean kingdom. In the story, the traveler reaches a land where everyone has mustaches, male and female alike. Since this land is called Fusang, sometimes used as a term for Japan (Reed 2008), one might leap to the conclusion these are the so-called "hairy Ainu." At the end of the story, however, it is revealed that the traveler has reached an underwater realm, where the characters, as nice as they might be, stroking their whiskers, are all shrimp (Reed 2001:41-43). Drawn to the genres of joke, anecdote, and strange tale, Duan Chengshi makes it difficult to distinguish fictional elements from what could be valuable ethnographic material. On the other hand, Duan Chengshi's miscellany does not demonstrate a storytelling interest that makes Italian, German, French, and English fairy tale "collections" homogenous in tone, imagery, length, and sensibility. His miscellany juxtaposes many genres in a haphazard way; this particular story has a number of lacunae and abrupt transitions, noted in Appendix A, that support the idea that Duan jotted down a story he did not

[4] The history of Yongzhou/Nanning can be traced using Tang Dynasty records. For example, Jeffrey Barlow states: "In 742, the leader Huang Jinggao briefly submitted before again resisting the Tang. He seized Yongzhou with one thousand men, but when emissaries were sent to him, he again submitted" (2005:19).

totally understand. R. D. Jameson instead assumes the lacunae are indications that this is a "decayed myth," one retold over so many centuries that the coherence has been lost (1932:92); he holds Li Shiyuan responsible for retelling an old story that Li didn't understand, rather than believing that Duan Chengshi was the one creating gaps and ambiguity as he wrote down in Classical Chinese what he recalled hearing.

Steven Harrell calls the Han a "constructed category," one that can be delineated only in contrast with an "ethnic other" (2001:295). He further defines the Han Chinese as a "central culture, represented in the governmental and scholarly institutions of the Confucian elite" (306). This definition suits the collector Duan well. Reed has made available much information about Duan's distinguished family of scholar-literati-officials from the northern capital city of Chang'an (modern Xi'an). Because his life is well documented, we know that Duan lived in and near Nanning between 826 and 853 (Reed 2001:2). Duan could have used his imagination to begin and end a tale with reference to the ethnic group being displaced by the northern Han Chinese entering this southern area and ruling it economically and politically. Chinese narratives are often framed by prefaces that are as fictional as the story they introduce, such as the famous "Peach Blossom Spring" preface by Tao Qian (365-427 CE). But Duan shows no other interest in the "cave-dwelling people," and even that choice of Chinese characters mischaracterizes their lifestyle and has been seen as pejorative. Harrell includes as a striking attribute of the Han that they can "live their lives in almost total ignorance of minority society and culture" (301). It is more likely that Duan acquired a servant in Nanning, not an intimate knowledge of Zhuang concerns. Logically, therefore, the more the Yexian story reflects Zhuang skills, lifestyle, religious beliefs, folklore, or stories that the Zhuang might have had access to more readily than the northern Han, the more the attribution of this story to Li Shiyuan can be accepted, including the idea that the story was told not only by a Zhuang member, but by one who believed the story was created by his people and about them.

A Historical, Political Interpretation

My emphasis on the Tang Dynasty stems from an assumption that vivid descriptive detail often reflects the period when the story was collected and written down (see Dundes 1982:v). There seems to be no question that the story was recorded c. 850, sometime between 820 when Duan was a young man and 863 at his death. One approach that has not been pursued would interpret the story by focusing on the regional concerns of the Tang Dynasty between 618-863 CE, with an emphasis on the later years, which the storyteller Li Shiyuan would have known most about.

The story states that it has been "passed down from pre-Qin-Han times" (Mair 2005:364). More than the Western "once upon a time" or "long, long ago" that are timeless introductory phrases, the dating suggests "the good old days . . . before Qin-Han conquest" (Waley 1947:151). In the Qin Dynasty, Emperor Shi Huangdi (ruled 221-210 BCE) united China with his capital in Chang'an (Xi'an). This unification led to the 400-year Han Dynasty that gave its name to the dominant cultural group. More specifically, Shi Huangdi placed Nanning under the administration of Guilin Prefecture; Guilin, to the north of Nanning in Guangxi, was under

control of Chang'an by 207 BCE (Ferguson 2000:3). After 25 CE, "Chinese migration from the north began in earnest and the influence of Chinese cultural practices began to transform the area" (*idem*). Placing the story before the Qin Dynasty, therefore, makes it appear to be a story of a non-Sinitic people, the Zhuang in a "pure" state.

Yet the perspective reflects the vantage point of someone who knows about the Qin and the Han; the informant and/or collector looks back from a later time, in this case c. 850. To give a historical context, Waley discusses the history of 759 when "rebellious aborigines" were suppressed in the Guangxi area; this suppression occurred during the An Lushan Rebellion of 756-63 that caused the deaths of millions of people. Chinese particularly blamed An Lushan, a Turkic-Sogdian general, and endured the later actions of Uighurs and Tibetans, each of whom briefly took over the destroyed capital at different times. To the indigenous people of remote Guangxi, however, their local rebellion could be perceived as a justified protest against high taxation and enforced labor, including the sharply increased conscription of peasants into the military in the 750s (Backus 1981:73). According to Edwin G. Pulleyblank's 1955 analysis of the causes of the An Lushan Rebellion, the flow of wealth to the capital, including luxury goods from southern China, necessitated higher taxes and a greater military to collect them; the luxury items were also seen as corrupting influences on the imperial court. After 763 the Chinese empire was weakened, and a Buddhist kingdom of Nan Zhao even ruled in Yunnan and Chengdu, west and north of Guangxi. Charles Backus summarizes: "Throughout the T'ang Period, and particularly in the ninth century, there was a virtually unending series of insurrections against Chinese control by one or another of these aboriginal groups in the hinterlands of Kwangsi [Guangxi] and Annam [North Vietnam]" (1981:131).

From the Qin of 207 BCE through the later Tang Dynasty, therefore, the history of the Zhuang area—including Guangxi and Vietnam—includes local resistance to dominance from North China. From this historical context, the theme of displacement emerges from the story: Yexian, too, falls from power to powerlessness. Her father is a tribal leader, but first her mother and then her father dies; she acts as a servant in the household of her stepmother. She is "abused by her stepmother, who often ordered her to gather firewood in dangerous (steep) places and draw water from the depths" (Mair 2005:364). Her condition of servitude parallels that of the storyteller, Li Shiyuan, who became a "servant" in Duan Chengshi's household, but who "was originally a member of the tribal community" (366). Since both the Zhuang storyteller and the heroine share an original status higher than a servant, it is not surprising that the narration rewards the girl with transformation into a queen-like role. In one way, the story reveals the inherent dignity and worth of a minority person. The finery at the end of the story is not a foreign costume but the wonderful revelation of her native dress, her "true" identity.

What happens to the foreign king is equally interesting in that it deviates from the "happily ever after" Western norm. Once the king becomes "greedy," magic fishbones stop producing wealth. The king buries the fishbones at the seashore with "a hundred bushels of pearls and using gold for a boundary" (Mair 2005:366). Pearls and gold are certainly luxury items, and both pearls and gold were imported from South China to Chang'an. The extravagance of the wealth illustrates the corrupting abundance described by Pulleyblank. The story ends with a warning: "When the conscripted soldiers rebelled, he was planning to disburse [the pearls and gold] to provide for the troops, but one night they were washed away by the tide" (*idem*). The

pronoun "he" could refer either to the king or to a general, but there is no doubt that this version of the story ends on a note of political warning, not domestic harmony.

Because European and American "Cinderella" stories do not include rebelling soldiers, this ending may not appear integral to the story, but this Zhuang version is a coherent whole if interpreted politically: from the first mention of the Qin to the last sentence, the story concerns a government that had the power to enter an area and oppress ("conscript") the indigenes. The indigenous people view themselves as ethical and highly skilled, able to produce pure and beautiful objects from the land (pearls and gold) in astonishing abundance; the stepmother and king both become rapacious, and such unethical behavior leads to rebellion. That the stepmother and stepsister die in a hail of "flying stones" seems unsurprising; their neighbors may or may not have thrown the stones, but retributory violence is part of the story. Ninth-century China was barely recovering from the death and destruction of eighth-century rebellion, an insurrection in which the Guangxi clearly participated. This interpretation is quite fitting for a Zhuang storyteller presenting a veiled political story to a Han Chinese employer, part of the ruling elite that moved into Guangxi.

This historical/political interpretation follows the theories of Jack Zipes, who believes that fairy tales reflect the "socio-historical context in which the narratives were created"; furthermore, "the truth value of a fairy tale is dependent on the degree to which a writer is capable of using a symbolical narrative strategy and stereotypical characterization to depict, expose, or celebrate the modes of behavior that were used and justified to attain power in the civilizing process of a given society" (2001:845). Zipes also discusses the paradox of oral stories of an underclass being written down by ruling and educated classes. There is a "threatening aspect of wondrous change, turning the world upside-down" (847). His analysis fits this version that threatens both the stepmother and the foreign king with "wondrous change."

That the story's vivid details mirror Tang Dynasty concerns of the Zhuang in Guangxi does not mean that the narrative framework and the motifs familiar in the West also "originated independently" with the Zhuang and were not "importations" (to use Jameson's distinction, 1932:73). The historical-political interpretation I have given offers only one way to interpret the story; other features of the story become highlighted when different Asian cultural traditions are explored.

An Introduction to the "Zhuang"

In *Creating the Zhuang: Ethnic Politics in China*, Katherine Kaup describes the largest ethnic minority in China, with a population well over sixteen million in Yunnan and Guangxi alone. When the Communist government of the People's Republic of China established the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in 1958, the people termed Zhuang were given certain rights along with other minority groups (2000:2). Before the 1950s, the term was rarely used by ethnic groups who previously identified themselves within a local context (56). In the twenty-first century, a transnational identification is significant politically (3) and underlies the development of Nanning as a "Gateway City" of eight million. With the People's Republic of China now giving its minorities certain privileges, they are encountering problems in

establishing who is "Zhuang." I use the term for people who say they are Zhuang, who speak the language, or who continue customs and beliefs they ascribe to Zhuang heritage.

Intrigued by questions concerning the provenance of the Yexian story, I decided to travel to Guilin and Nanning in Guangxi Province in 2007. This trip allowed me to make observations in and around Guilin among the Zhuang who maintain practices, for example in aquaculture, dating to the Tang Dynasty; I drew upon the knowledge of a guide, Si Yu Chen, born and raised in Nanning and educated about the history of the area with its many Tang Dynasty sites. In addition, referrals from Kaup led me to three Zhuang professors from Guangxi University for Nationalities in Nanning who met with me throughout a day, giving their interpretations of Yexian's story and answering my many questions. The three scholars were Dr. Fan Honggui, who teaches Vietnamese and is interested in cross-regional Zhuang culture; his student Dr. Huang Xingqui, who is now a beginning language professor; and Dr. Nong Xueguan, professor of Zhuang folklore and literature.

Although the interviews were sequential, I summarize here the insights of Professors Fan and Nong together; Dr. Huang translated and added his ideas. Both Professors Fan and Nong are scholars of Yexian's story; they began by mentioning the innumerable versions, especially those in Vietnam and China both in the past and the present. They fully accepted it as a Zhuang story, and Dr. Fan was careful to say that the Vietnamese felt that their versions preceded the Nanning Tang Dynasty version. They brought to the interview their own copies of the story in classical Chinese. They were well aware of the collector Duan Chengshi and his c. 850 miscellany, *Youyang zazu.*

Analyzing the "Yexian" Text

My questions to the Zhuang professors about individual words and phrases drew upon three English translations of "Yexian" that are accompanied by meticulous introductions and footnotes highlighting ambiguities in the classical Chinese text: Jameson 1932, Waley 1963, and Mair 2005. Rather than seeking one definitive translation, my approach has been to compare and value multiple translations and interpretations that enrich the story from different perspectives. The Zhuang professors were familiar with Jameson's lecture, originally delivered in China. After discussing the meaning of the term "cave-dweller," the Zhuang scholars chose to focus on four story motifs (ones that Cox used to define the "Cinderella" story) and to root these motifs in Zhuang customs and traditions: 1) the guardian figure, the counterpart of the Western fairy godmother; 2) a marvelous blue dress; 3) a golden shoe that fits only Yexian's foot; and finally, 4) marriage to a foreign king. They were less interested in a distinctive motif in the Yexian narrative that concerns a gold-red carp, although my own research asserts that this motif ties together Hindu, Zhuang, and Han narratives and traditions.

Cave-dweller

As I have noted, the same terminology is used to describe Yexian's father and the story-teller Li Shiyuan. Duan identifies Li Shiyuan as a "cave man" from Yung Chow (Jameson

1932:77), "from the caves of Yung-chou" (Waley 1947:151); "servant of my household and originally the member of a tribal community in Yongzhou [Nanning]" (Mair 2005:366). In the story proper, Yexian's father is called a "chief of a mountain cave" (Jameson 1932:75) of the local "aborigines" (Waley 1947:149, Mair 2005:164) and a "tribal leader" (Mair 2005:164). The first point that both Zhuang professors Fan and Nong wanted to clarify was the term "cave-dweller." Since there are thousands of caves in the Guangxi limestone, I had taken the term literally. Near Guilin there had been many indications that the Zhuang had lived in caves and performed rituals there; inscriptions in the caves (in classical Chinese from the scholar-literati Han-Chinese class) date from the Tang Dynasty. Professors Fan and Nong explained that "cave" meant a sheltered location. Their desire to provide this clarification seemed puzzling until I reread Waley: "Sung times (tenth to thirteenth centuries) 'cave' had come simply to mean 'native settlement.' The *Sung History* enumerates eleven 'caves' (native settlements) near Nanning. It is evident from the story that Cinderella lived in a house, not a cave, and that the term 'cave-owner' is applied to her father in an ethnic, not a literal, sense" (1947:152). While it was important to the scholars that the Chinese character translated by Jameson as "a mountain cave" not be rendered literally, they assumed the term applied to the Zhuang.[5]

Even Waley's term "aborigine" and Mair's "tribal" have connotations of a people less technologically advanced than inhabitants of the ruling class. In the next section I will discuss the extensive evidence indicating a high level of sophistication in Zhuang culture during the Tang Dynasty, suggesting why the Zhuang scholars object to the implication that their Tang Dynasty ancestors were "cavemen."

The Person from the Sky

The next point of animated discussion concerned the being that appears after the girl weeps. Fan and Nong thought that this passage conveyed Zhuang belief in the power of ancestors (often oversimplified as ancestor worship). They thought that the being represents either the girl's dead mother or father; there are many versions of "Cinderella" that make this interpretation more explicit (Schaefer 2003:140). Mair's footnote makes clear that the word is not gender-specific. I asked about the unbound hair, and Professor Nong's reply was that it signified a "witch." That was the English term that he preferred after weighing alternatives, and he acknowledged that this word choice had complex gendered connotations.

Clothing for the Festival

Following the chronology of the story, the next motif we discussed involved the clothing that the girl wears to go to a "festival," which appears after the intercession of the guardian

[5] Barlow mentions that the word *dong* was used to designate "village structures" of the Zhuang and states that in mountainous areas "the term might have been confused with similar terms for 'cave'" (2005:27). His observation about this confusion is not related to the Yexian text (which he does not discuss), but does refer to the social structure of the Zhuang in the Tang Dynasty. In examining Tang Dynasty documents, Barlow used the Chinese character for Zhuang with a radical that literally translates as "dog"; the "dog" radical was changed to "person" in the twentieth century because it was considered pejorative (2005:43).

figure. Jameson translates the clothing in one sentence: She "dressed herself in bluish finery" (1932:76). Professor Nong brought with him photographs taken with Zhuang women in cloth of a sky-blue color. This color is prized among some Zhuang groups, along with the plants that produce its unusual brightness. The professors felt that the beauty of the cloth was a strong marker of identification between the Zhuang and the story. Different ethnic groups in the region distinguish themselves by a certain color in their textiles; the "Black-clothes Zhuang of Napo," for example, are known for their black head coverings, jackets, aprons, and so on (Xiao et al. 2006:78-83); the "White trousered Yao" are another example (92-93).

Waley and Mair differ from Jameson in their word choice for what the latter calls "bluish finery." Waley says that the girl was "wearing a cloak of stuff spun from kingfisher feathers" (1947:150), and Mair translates the phrase as "she wore a blouse woven of kingfisher feathers" (2005:365). The ambiguity lies with the word "kingfisher"; the bird's feathers can be of a bright blue iridescent color. Whether one takes the word literally or as a reference to color lies with the person receiving the story; the ambiguity is in the Chinese character whether one speaks Zhuang, Mandarin, or English. When asked about the bird, Professor Nong clearly stated that he did not believe the reference was to a bird. On the other hand, Professor Huang later brought in a photograph that seemed to depict dancers in feather headdress on Dong bronze drums, a motif that repeats on contemporary Zhuang textiles made for tourists. Kingfishers are native to watery Southwest China, including the Nanning area, and to Southeast Asia, where they were hunted in Cambodia to supply a Chinese market with feathers for jewelry. Paul Kroll (1984) gives evidence that robes and even curtains made of kingfisher feathers existed in the Tang Dynasty.[6] I will return to the most famous use of kingfisher feathers for a persecuted woman later in the "Han Chinese" section.

The Golden Shoe

In light of what has been said of the kingfisher-blue clothing, the ambiguity of the golden shoe becomes easier to understand. Jameson calls them "golden shoes" (1932:76), Waley "shoes of gold" (1947:150), and Mair "golden slippers" (2005:365). In a footnote Mair speculates that the slippers "were probably embroidered with gold thread" (366, see also Ting 1974:39). The word in Chinese can refer to the metal or the color. Both Fan and Nong interpreted the description of the shoes as meaning "of great worth or value." The mystery of the shoes also lies in the later descriptions of them: "light as a feather . . . making no sound on stones" (Mair 2005:365), "light as a hair" (Jameson 1932:76), and "light as down" (Waley 1963:150), descriptions that sound magical when combined with a metallic gold shoe in some English translations but actually support a reading of the shoes as made of cloth.

Professor Nong reported that Zhuang girls make and give pairs of shoes to young men they fancy. Embroidery is a treasured Zhuang art form. There are a number of legends about the origin of Zhuang brocade that involve a "Heavenly Palace" and a "Heavenly King." The legend "Da Ni Watched the Sun and Wove a Brocade*"* starts with lines describing "a smart young Zhuang girl Da Ni who was good at weaving. She was not satisfied with brocade as it was and

[6] See also Schafer 1967:238-39 on the Tang Dynasty history of kingfisher feathers.

pondered day and night how to weave more beautiful cloth" (Xaio et al. 2006:74). This beginning parallels the start of the c. 850 story and reinforces Mair's interpretation that Yexian is very skilled in embroidery.

It should be noted that the story does not emphasize that the girl has an unusually small foot. In Mair's translation the shoe shrinks when other women attempt to put it on (2005:365), unlike Waley's translation in which the shoe is an inch shorter than the smallest foot of any other woman (1947:150). Ting mentions that in the Zhuang area, including Vietnam, a woman would make her own shoes to "fit her own feet to perfection" (1974:39). The Zhuang scholars did not mention the size of the shoe, but rather that it was richly and skillfully made.

Zhuang shoes displayed at the Nanning Provincial Museum in 2007 are made of cloth, rigid enough so that they either snugly fit or do not fit an individual's foot. They are indeed richly embroidered, with some threads that give a golden metallic glow. Despite the legitimate questions about using contemporary artifacts to bolster an interpretation of a literary text written down twelve hundred years ago, the existence of these shoes supports the interpretation that Yexian's shoes were embroidered with gold thread.

The Kingdom of Tuohan

Professor Nong suggested Sumatra as the island domain of the king who identifies Yexian through her shoe and marries her. Dr. Nong referred us to Jameson, who found a reference to Tuohan in the *Record of the Early T'ang*. Three months' journey from French Indo-China, Tuohan was an island country that sent embassies to Tang China in 645 and 648 (Jameson 1932:77-78). Waley believes that Tuohuan was "an Indianized kingdom on an island off the northern shore of the gulf of Siam, politically dependent upon the great Mon kingdom of Dvaravati" (1947:154). Mair also mentions Dvaravati in reference to Tuohan, adding that Dvaravati flourished from the sixth through thirteenth centuries (2005:366). Ting, however, sees no reason to associate Tuohuan with Dvaravati and makes the general comment that "place names mentioned in folk-narratives . . . cannot be used as reliable indicators of their primary home" (1974:8).

The geographical description of Tuohan is tantalizing: the "tribal community bordered on an ocean island, and on the island was a kingdom [that was] militarily powerful and ruled over scores of [other] islands" (Mair 2005:365). This description might fit the kingdom of Srivijaya in Sumatra, directly south of Nanning but closer to South Vietnam. During the Tang Dynasty there were trading connections between Srivijaya and China. In the seventh century, a Chinese Buddhist monk reported his study of Srivijaya; in the ninth century, rulers of Srivijaya may have had enough power in Java to build the great Buddhist temple of Borobudur (c. 825). Dr. Nong did not mention Srivijaya specifically; however, his interest in the Yexian story as a historical document is due to his interest in Tang Dynasty connections between Guangxi and Sumatra.

Wherever the foreign king comes from, that country is not the source of this story, which concerns a local woman who leaves home. The story tries hard to explain how the island king could have seen the wonderful shoe left at the festival, but there are many more links to the northern Chinese empire than to an empire across the southern ocean.

Reflections on the Zhuang Scholars' Interpretation

The importance of my 2007 interviews goes beyond the analysis of the discrete parts of the Yexian story. No record I could find before traveling to Guangxi in 2007 mentioned how the Zhuang felt about the Yexian story or whether even they believed the story stemmed from a Zhuang storyteller or from the Nanning area. In Nanning, it was quite evident that Zhuang professors Fang and Nong embraced the story as that of their own history and culture, especially when the term "Zhuang" is considered to be transnational, including subgroups in Vietnam.

The focus of the two scholars was to connect the story to Zhuang accomplishments. The girl was a member of a civilized group who lived in houses. A witch, a member of her own group, offered solutions that led to wealth and recognition. The girl was innovative and skilled at embroidery, making and using dye, and creating valuable slippers and a beautiful dress of an unusual bright blue. She was hardworking and kind. The story fits a culture where Zhuang women take an active role in selecting husbands and signal their preferences in a language of tokens, including embroidered shoes. They respond to the beauty of nature with aesthetic creation. Such artifacts could well attract the attention of a king from afar, and Zhuang festivals enhanced contact with foreign kingdoms.

From the point of view of the Zhuang who were interviewed, therefore, the Yexian story originated with an account of a Zhuang woman's life, including Zhuang religious belief. According to this view, much of the mystery occurs because of abrupt transitions, lost explanations, and transcription into the written form of classical Chinese.

Further Information about Zhuang Culture of the Tang Dynasty

Although intermarrying and intermingling resulted in a culturally complex group of Zhuang people by the time of the Tang Dynasty, it is appalling to leap over Asian cultural contexts to conclude, as Jameson does, the story comes from the "detritus of a myth by which our primitive ancestors described the rising sun" (1932:84). This story is not about the sun's rise and fall. Jameson takes the story out of its cultural context by aligning it with an Egyptian religious obsession. The word "primitive" is particularly objectionable. While the Tang Dynasty Zhuang did not have a writing system and struggled militarily against armies sent from Xi'an, historically their use of bronze drums, three-level wooden houses, textiles, and agricultural innovations indicates a high level of technological advancement, which was similar to related ethnic groups such as the Dong in South China.

The Yexian story is not one of a culturally impoverished heroine, but of a girl with cultural resources who subverts attempts to change her status to one resembling a household slave. Life was precarious for the Zhuang in the late Tang Dynasty. Children were sometimes used as household slaves by both Han Chinese and Zhuang households, and were "sold as commercial items" in export (Barlow 2005:22).[7] It is a defining characteristic of the "Cinderella"

[7] Barlow quotes a Tang Dynasty proclamation of 856 CE forbidding Zhuang slavery, which was blamed for political unrest (2005:23-24).

story, however, that rebellion against a slave-like status is told in terms of being under the control of one's father's second wife. According to Barlow, polygamy was practiced among the Zhuang in the late Tang Dynasty, and children were supposed to be treated equally; the literal translation makes it clear that Yexian's father married two wives, with the first one, Yexian's mother, dying. The term "stepmother" is therefore a translator's approximation that makes the story appear closer to its European counterparts. In recent centuries, however, the Zhuang have been described as monogamous. The story includes seeds that suggest an ideal relationship in which one woman and one man uniquely match one another and live happily ever after: the shoe, of course, fits only one woman; the woman becomes the king's "first wife." Competition among sexual partners and among siblings does appear to be a universal problem, and Bruno Bettelheim's 1976 analysis of the "Cinderella" story in the light of Freudian theories helps to explain the psychological power of this c. 850 story. In its own terms, the story is one of successfully overcoming obstacles and regaining a positive identity, in which one is cherished by others (236-77).

Further, Zhuang women of the Tang Dynasty had exceptionally high status and freedom of movement. In his comprehensive review of primary material, Barlow explicitly concludes that Zhuang women had higher status than Han-Chinese women of the same period (2005:24). Zhuang were not constrained by arranged marriages and dowries as Han Chinese women were; they mingled with men, especially on festival days, where they formed and signaled their preferences in a number of ways. Barlow reports that there were female as well as male "sorcerers" (28); this statement supports the scholars' interpretation that the figure who responds to Yexian's grief was female. Barlow speculates that women's high status derived from their highly valued weaving, a major source of Zhuang economic prosperity (26) and a cultural marker that the Zhuang scholars described with much pride.

A puzzling sentence at the beginning of the Yexian narrative can be understood by reference to this Zhuang expertise in embroidery. Yexian is introduced in the story by saying she was good at a skill, either "(sifting gold?)" (Jameson 1932:75) or "making pottery on the wheel" (Waley 1963:149). Mair comments that the verb is uncertain and makes a key suggestion that she is "spinning gold thread" (2005:366). Barlow states that the Guangxi prefecture was wealthy, with one gold mine being a "truly significant producer," and he refers to a Song Dynasty source that indicates that alluvial gold, found in stream beds, was sifted under the control of Zhuang headmen (22-23). These facts would support Jameson's word choice. But a woman's skill lies in embroidery, not in the work of sluicing for gold that was done by "labor gangs." Many sources about the Zhuang extol women's embroidery, which is displayed on balls created by women to demonstrate their unique skill. These are tossed in a courtship ritual in which men identify women by their embroidery. This practice seems to have been extant in the Tang. Barlow mentions that this practice is depicted on bronze drums; he witnessed the practice in Nanning in 1984 (2005:33). In 2007 excellent new examples of these balls were available for sale at the Nanning Anthropological Museum. They include delicate designs of birds, butterflies, and other forms from nature in minute stitches against a silk background. I therefore agree with Mair's interpretation that Yexian was quite capable of creating shoes of gold thread that appeared astonishing and magical to those coming from afar.

My discussion of Zhuang embroidery reveals the difficulties of trying to illuminate a ninth-century literary text using later descriptions of an ethnic group's customs and traditions, and as a whole this is not my approach. Barlow's work is valuable because it specifically concerns the Zhuang people of Guangxi Province in the late Tang Period. The more recent the ethnographic evidence, however, the more uncertain that it applies to the Tang Dynasty. One story collected in 1984 is a version of what has been called the Zhuang "epic" featuring a Thunder God. Because I discern Hindu influences in it, I discuss the story later in this article after I discuss Hindu/Buddhist parallels.

With other narratives, it is clearer what type of contemporary bias influences a story's retelling. An example involves the story of "Liu Sanjie" ("Third Sister Liu"), which is believed to be a Zhuang story set in the Tang Dynasty of a young girl born into a family of fishermen (Zhang and Zeng 1993:287). One version has her killed at "Little Dragon Pond" and carried up to the sky on the back of a carp (*idem*). In 2007 and 2008, audiences of up to two thousand gathered nightly to watch a performance of "Third Sister Liu," featuring hundreds of male and female Zhuang actors living in an area around Yongshuo up the Li River from Guilin, Guangxi Province. The producer and director of this tourist extravaganza was the great film director Zhang Yimou; he was inspired by a 1961 film about Third Sister Liu, who leads Zhuang men and women against Confucian scholars and Han-Chinese landlords who force the Zhuang away from their riverbanks in a remote time period.

One well-documented Zhuang custom that the 1961 film illustrates is called the "Singing Contest," where women and men court and challenge each other (Barlow 2005:25; Zhang and Zeng 1993:285 for a full description of this custom). The contest is less about musicality than about wit, courage, and presence of mind in debating issues, attacking, and counterattacking through words. Third Sister Liu is a young, beautiful, and talented protector of her people. She is a successful leader of her community and is not killed in the film. Because of the 1961 production date, it would be easy to consider the film Communist propaganda; it foreshadows the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, when Mao Zedong sent middle class urbanites to live with and learn from rural peasants; women's liberation was a major goal of Chinese reform since 1919. While it is easy in this case to assume that the heroine was created to illustrate twentieth-century rather than ninth-century concerns and values, it is interesting that the 1961 director, Su Li, turned to the Zhuang for a feminist heroine. At the end of the 1961 film, the Zhuang Sister Liu dives into the river—a spirit incarnate returning to her element with a froggy, fishy leap.

The association of Liu Sanjie with a supernatural carp and Little Dragon Pond supports the hypothesis that Yexian is also a Zhuang heroine. A comparison between the two heroines also supports the argument that Yexian's dominant characteristics are talent and resilient determination to resist authority, not passive suffering and wishful thinking (as some interpret the Western "Cinderella" story). The woman's element is water; her natural ally is a fish. The image of the red carp needs to be examined carefully in the Yexian c. 850 text and in the context of ninth-century Guangxi Province.

The Red Carp and the Watery World of South China

In the c. 850 story there is a key symbol of human interaction with the natural world central to the Yexian story. This story element begins with Yexian's discovery of a very small unusual fish. After Yexian loses her mother and father to death, as well as the clothes that define her identity, she first rescues and then loses this fish. Her story is of loss so profound that the narrative moves to metaphor. The discovery of a gold-red carp and the knowledge of how to raise such fish transformed the literal landscape and way of life of the Zhuang in Guangxi; on a figurative level the Yexian story transforms into a deeply evocative text of loss after loss, then recovery—a story with universal resonance.

Yexian is not passive; driven by her "stepmother to gather firewood in dangerous (steep), places and draw water from the depths" (Mair 2005:364), Yexian, spontaneously and without motivation, saves and protects a vulnerable, small creature—her counterpart. The description of how Yexian raises the fish is very precise. The story reads that "she caught a fish a little over two inches long with a dark red dorsal fin and golden eyes [in her bucket], whereupon she put it in a bowl of water and raised it. Day by day it grew, causing her to change the bowl several times. It grew so big that no bowl could hold it; consequently she threw it into the pond out back. Whatever extra food the girl got hold of, she right away submerged it [in the pond] to feed the fish" (*idem*). While Mair's translation says the fish grows to ten feet long, Jameson gives the less fantastic and more human figure of five feet (1932:75). The fish befriends her; when she goes to the pond, "the fish would be sure to stick its head out of the water and pillow it on the bank" (Mair 2005:364). What happens next is pivotal in the story. The stepmother tricks Yexian and puts on her "shabby" clothing, killing the fish with a knife and eating its flesh, which she finds "tasty" (365). It is this death that leads Yexian to "cry in the wilderness" (*idem*), causing a person from the sky to appear.

The Zhuang Scholars' Interpretation of the Fish

Professors Fan and Nong focused only on the bones of the fish after it is killed by the stepmother. The Yexian text says that a person from the sky tells the girl to retrieve the fishbones from the place where things are thrown away and to keep them in her room and pray to them. Independently, however, both Fan and Nong talked as if the fishbones had been placed into a bowl and buried where a tree had grown. Thus the fish more readily represents the departed parent, whose bones are figuratively buried, and the resulting tree and the "person from the sky" represent the continued life of the parent. Fan and Nong's departure from the text here is, in a way, their interpretation of the text and is in accord with what Professor Fan said were the basic

beliefs of the Zhuang: "animism and ancestor worship."[8] This discrepancy with the Tang Dynasty written text makes one wonder what redeems fishbones specifically from being thrown away and why not throwing them away might lead to wealth and good fortune.

Evidence from Guangxi Province

In turning to a fish with the red fin and golden eyes, one sees an animal now valued widely in East and Southeast Asia. The red carp has been embraced as a good-luck symbol by Chinese throughout the PRC and Taiwan. It is linked to a story about a sturdy river fish, able to swim upriver and overcome waterfalls, a symbol of fortitude for male scholars (Ball 1927:189). A happy baby holding a red fish and sitting on a lotus blossom appears in statues, calendars, and pictures large and small. Red carp kites fly. Culturally, the red-gold carp is also related to the ubiquitous and hardy goldfish (Williams 1976:184-85). Neither goldfish nor Koi (I use the more widely known Japanese word) is eaten, taboo partly because of the monetary value of the human-manipulated variants and partly because the pet is a companion. Biologically, both Koi and goldfish have their genesis in the South of China. But no scholarship I have found has linked the history of these real red-gold fish to the c. 850 story of a fish befriended by a young girl who weeps when it is killed.

Why a story told by the Zhuang would highlight a carp becomes very clear when one visits the Guilin area where the Zhuang still work primarily as fishermen. Guangxi is a watery countryside, with many springs, streams, and rivers among beautiful hills with thin soil over limestone; even the city of Nanning contains many lakes.

That something novel and significant occurred involving red carp in the Tang Dynasty is reinforced by scientific, historical, literary, and pictorial records. The economic implications suggest that Yexian was a "Culture Bearer," associated by Anne Birrell with a type of myth concerning those who first teach "the techniques and arts of culture and civilization" (1993:41). Birrell highlights that "in Chinese mythology the origin and production of food and the cultivation, reclamation, and nurture of the land are major mythological themes" (*idem*). There is much scientific literature about the cultivation of carp because aquaculture feeds so many in the world, and integrated rice-fish farming systems in China have been recognized as "one of the globally important ingenious agricultural heritage systems" (Lu and Li 2006:106). Pottery models found in East Han Dynasty tombs (25-220 CE) in Sichuan Provinces show carp in flooded rice fields (*ibid.*:108). When the Zhuang adopted this farming technique and the use of large fishponds, as opposed to catching river fish, is a question relevant to this paper.

That raising carp in ponds spread from South China to India, Java, Japan, and elsewhere after the Tang Dynasty supports the hypothesis that the Yexian story was also exported from

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[8] One Internet source with little documentation states that "the Zhuang believe the dead enter a netherworld where they have influence over the living. Corpses are buried three days after death with some favorite possessions while mournful songs are sung. The corpse is disinterred after the three years. The bones are placed in an urn that in turn is placed in a cave." This description suggests that Professors Fan and Nong were interpreting the story to conform with Zhuang burial practices. One wonders if the word "cave" is accurate here. The same source also states that Zhuang religion "incorporates elements of ancestor worship, Buddhism, and Taoism. Zhuang ancestor worship differs in that it embraces kings and mythical and historical heroes and heroines." (http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=185&catid=5&subcatid=30

Zhuang territory, even though there are earlier instances of raising fish in ponds, for example in Egypt. Chinese aquaculture techniques spread into India around 1127 (Costa-Pierce 1987:321); the raising of carp in fishponds was introduced to Java in the sixteenth century and spread into Indonesia from Java. Multi-colored Koi were developed in Japan only two centuries ago, but they were bred from Chinese carp—a fact that has been challenged but verified by DNA testing that demonstrated that Koi are descended from Oujiang red color carp found in the Oujiang River in southeast China (Wang and Li 2004). Koi are now associated both with religion and with secular wealth, and displayed in Buddhist temple grounds (Japan), Hindu sacred locations (Bali), and luxury hotels in Japan, Bali, and around the world. Balon (2004:4) distinguishes carp raised in China from the domesticated carp raised in Italy of the Roman Empire and in medieval Europe. True to the Yexian story, early Chinese carp were not technically "domesticated animals" because they needed "wild fish . . . frequently added to breeding stocks" (*idem*). A Song Dynasty book of 1243 CE describes how live carp fry were transported and traded in bamboo baskets (3).

For a child to find a two-inch fish and bring it home is not an unusual story for ninth-century China, but this is an unusual fish in its behavior, color, and ability to grow. Yexian's fish "shows its head using the bank as a pillow. It would not show itself as others came" (Jameson 1932:75). This trait is familiar to those who have fed Koi; their gaping mouths appear above water, and they come to the clap of those with whom they are familiar. Certain breeding of red carp, such as "Cyprinus carpio var. color," produces unusual body weight and length, with some up to one hundred pounds (Wang and Li 2004:abstract). Further, the size of the growth will, like goldfish and Koi, be governed by the size of the body of water in which they are kept. Outside Guilin, Zhuang have large fishponds, often the length and breadth of a small house. With a fishpond of this size, carp grow large and provide a stable and secure source of protein. Fish in fishponds can also be privately owned and can be a source of great wealth where fishing in rivers and lakes is a communal activity.

The story here sounds didactic: teaching others exactly how to raise very big fish. Therefore, on one level this story is that of a highly significant "culture bearer," to use Anne Birrell's term. The girl is an innovator because she has discovered the way to cultivate carp that are not true domesticates and do not breed in captivity. It makes sense that a child who is encouraged to forage far away from home would be attracted to an unusual red fish and would carry it to a place where Oujiang red carp are not found. Then, because she hides and feeds the fish, she discovers ways to make this kind of fish grow spectacularly.

This literal interpretation leads to a reconsideration of the person who finds Yexian crying after the fish is killed and eaten. This person has key advice, which is to take the fishbones from the dung heap. I formed a hypothesis that the fishbones should be put to use as fertilizer. Above Yongshuo, in the terraced rice fields where fish in the summer months are still raised in the flooded rice paddies, we asked Zhuang fishermen what they did with fishbones. They laughed and said that they used burnt fishbones as fertilizer—burned them because otherwise the bones stuck in their feet as they worked in the terraces. One can object that peoples all over the world use fishbones as fertilizer, as American Indians are said to have done when growing maize. But the Yexian story indicates that the Zhuang people had not done this; the story has the stepmother

[9] All the photographs in this article were taken by the author in November 2007.

throwing the bones into the garbage where the girl has to retrieve them.

Figure 1. Fishponds outside Guilin, Guangxi Province, identified as created by and belonging to the Zhuang.

If the girl is therefore an intelligent innovator and "culture bearer," does this mean that the story belongs to a misty mythic past? For China, the answer seems to be no; significant changes occurred in Chinese aquaculture in the Tang Dynasty when "Emperor Li banned the culture, fishing, sale and consumption of the common carp because its Chinese name was the same as the Emperor" (Costa-Pierce 1987:321). Yet this proscription has been an unexpected boon to all Chinese since that time. Four other types of carp were developed that were not red and not taboo; these other types eat different grubs among rice plants and provide a model for raising rice before pesticide. During the Tang Dynasty, therefore, significantly better aquaculture perhaps became associated with a taboo against eating colored carp. Since Koi are not eaten, the Yexian story seems to explain the evolution of dinner into a sacred and taboo aesthetic object.

This taboo gains an ethical dimension. On one level, the girl's grief is caused by the contradiction between the need to eat and the need for companionship; eating pets appears to be a universal taboo. In the context of rural impoverishment, an interpretation could be that the stepmother eats the fish because she is indeed very hungry, for it is when the woman wears rags resembling Yexian's that she kills the fish. As in European fairy tales, such as "Hansel and Gretel," the older woman with her knife threatens Yexian on a symbolic level; the fish could also represent a baby growing to be a child that the older girl has been nurturing. This interpretation gives the story an urgent poignancy. The children of famished people die; neglect and infanticide are worldwide phenomena.

I believe the Zhuang storyteller has combined various narrative motifs to form an evocative whole that captured significant aspects of Tang Dynasty Guangxi, at a time when the Zhuang felt threatened by Han dominance. But to understand fully the Yexian story as a Zhuang story, it is also crucial to acknowledge that many of the key story motifs existed earlier in Hindu narratives, and that the story marks a pivotal time and place when these stories were transformed into secular tales that lost their specific religious and social meaning, reemerging and surviving in stories considered Buddhist.

Yexian's Gold-Red Carp and the Hindu Story of Manu and the Fish

Compare the Yexian story motif of the rescued carp with the Hindu story of Manu from the Satapatha Bhramana (Eggeling 1882:216-17):

> In the morning they brought to Manu water for washing, just as now also they (are wont to) bring (water) for washing the hands. When he was washing himself, a fish came into his hands. It spake to him the word, "Rear me, I will save thee!" "Wherefrom wilt thou save me?" "A flood will carry away all these creatures from that I will save thee!" "How am I to rear thee?" It said, "As long as we are small, there is great destruction for us: fish devours fish. Thou wilt first keep me in a jar. When I outgrow that, thou wilt dig a pit and keep me in it. When I outgrow that, thou wilt take me down to the sea, for then I shall be beyond destruction." It soon became a *ghasha* (a large fish); for that grows largest (of all fish) . . . . Thereupon it said, "In such and such a year that flood will come. Thou shalt then attend to me (i.e. to my advice) by preparing a ship; and when the flood has risen thou shalt enter into the ship, and I will save thee from it." After he had reared it in this way, he took it down to the sea.

Why are these elements similar to the Yexian story in detail and also in symbolic meaning? Saving the fish is a three-step process; the fish has to be gradually moved to bigger containers of water ending in a man-made pit or pond; both fish grow to such a size that they appear supernatural; both fish end up being released into a large body of water. Manu and Yexian demonstrate their virtue by saving the fish, and in both stories kindness is reciprocal: a human saves the fish; the fish saves the human. In the Yexian story, the red-gold carp, while unusual in color, friendliness, and ability to change size, remains a fish and does not talk. In the Hindu Manu story, the fish is an incarnation or avatar of Vishnu, Lord of the Universe (Ball 1927:200).[10]

The Yexian story ends with the gold, pearls, and fish bones being "washed away by the tide" (Mair 2005:366). In the Yexian story, this loss punishes the moral lapse of the foreign king who is greedy and conscripts soldiers; the rising water, while not necessarily the "flood" that becomes the focus of the Manu story, provides a similar function. The comparison makes one realize anew the integrity of the Yexian story as a whole. From the beginning Yexian is an ethical person; she demonstrates her morality by saving a fish; her morality is signified through royal status achieved through marriage; the royal status is signified by the accoutrements of wealth: jewels, dress, and shoes. Throughout the story, Yexian's morality is contrasted with the immorality of others: the stepmother, stepsister, and king are all punished for not caring about others and for excessive desire; Yexian is rewarded with riches.

Although Gilgamesh and Noah share the flood story, the Yexian narrative motifs do not draw directly from a Mesopotamian story recorded in cuneiform nor from Judeo-Christian-Muslim flood stories, but from the Indian world so closely in contact with China throughout the Tang Dynasty. Wendy Doniger (2009) describes the changing significance of the story of "Manu and the Fish" from the Brahamas (c. 800 BCE) to later times; she acknowledges that flood stories are told all over the world where there are floods, and she argues that one should accept a

[10] Doniger gives a version in which Manu realizes the large fish "must be Vishnu" (2009:58).

connection among Gilgamesh, Genesis, and "Manu and the Fish" without trying to trace a chronology of influence (54-59). The flood story is one example of the principle that Doniger articulates: that ideas spread and "take root only when they become important to people at a particular time, when they hitch on to something that those people care about" (21). South China frequently suffered from floods; one flood created a lake in Nanning during the Tang Dynasty, according to a 2007 sign posted in a Nanning park; another flood killed a child and forced "328,400 people [to be] relocated in Guangxi" in July 2009 (*China Daily* 2009).

That the Zhuang were aware of the Hindu stories is reinforced by an analysis of the story most identified with Zhuang culture, "Bubo and the Thunder God." One might question, as I certainly did for many years, whether the water that washes away Yexian's pearls and gold and washes the fish bones to the sea has anything to do with a mythic flood. Jameson, Waley, and Mair all use the word "tide" rather than "flood." The main plot of Bubo, however, leads to a flood that Bubo's children survive because they have kindly and spontaneously rescued the Thunder God; their goodness (and fertility) enables humanity to continue. This recent Bubo version, recorded in 1984 and identified as a Zhuang story from Guangxi Province, could have been influenced by Christians, Jews, or Muslims bringing the Genesis story to East Asia, but the Yexian date of c. 850 CE makes it much less likely that the Zhuang Bubo story was influenced by these religious traditions. As the next section explains in detail, the ninth century is the time when Hindu stories swept across Southeast Asia, a period when there was no political boundary between North Vietnam and Guangxi Province.

It seems a Zhuang storytelling characteristic, therefore, to combine some Hindu narrative motifs with their own value systems. The Bubo "epic" has no wrathful, lofty, righteous God; Bubo and the Thunder God seem equally energetic, funny, and accident-prone. Bubo's children are the saviors even though they, like Yexian, do not obey their parents. Zhuang heroes and heroines seem to delight in challenging hierarchy; Bubo dislikes "paying rent" to the Thunder God who acts as a landlord who likes to "stuff his stomach" (Miller 1995:137-38); parents, landlords, and gods alike threaten life itself. Like the "Third Sister Liu" story, "Bubo and the Thunder God" endorses rebellion against the landlord class through the weapons of satire: humor, wit, and exaggeration. Eurocentric commentators from Andrew Lang[11] to Graham Anderson have supposed that fairy tales became moralistic in modern French or English hands. But it seems to be a Zhuang characteristic to describe female children as saviors, not, I would argue, because Zhuang were telling stories to children, but rather because they value the spontaneous freedom of youth. This is very unlike the world of the Old Testament, unlike the Confucian world view with filial piety and male authority at its center, and unlike the central Hindu tradition with its caste system where women defile sacred texts by reading them (Doniger 2009:105).

Before leaving the Bubo story, I would like to analyze one other telling detail. After Bubo swipes off the Thunder God's feet, the god does not slow down but kills a chicken for its claws, "so from then on, Thunder God had a pair of claws for his feet" (149). In China, the image known as Leigong the Thunder God remains with little wings on his back as described in this Zhuang story (Miller 1995:137); the muscular human body has arms and legs ending in talons.

[11] For example, see Lang's introduction to Cox 1893.

When one compares this image to images of Garuda, the Hindu avatar of Vishnu, they appear identical and equally similar to images of the eagle Garuda depicted in ninth-century Java and in later times throughout Tibet, Indonesia, and Thailand. Changing an eagle's talons to chicken feet is comical; the sympathy of the story lies with the underdog, not with a mighty eagle.[12]

Connecting Zhuang stories with Hindu motifs will be explained further in a chronological/geographical context in the next section. In the ninth century, when the Yexian story was recorded, Hindu narratives, not just Buddhist texts, crossed borders that would later divide South, Southeast, and East Asia. The *Ramayana,* not "Manu and the Fish," was the dominant Hindu story transmitted. Like Manu's fish, Rama is an avatar of Vishnu, or Vishnu in bodily form. While the resemblance of either the Rama-Sita-Hanuman or the Manu-fish Hindu story to Yexian's story can be dismissed (as it has been ignored in the past), its resemblance to two stories of Vishnu's avatars supports the idea that one major source of the Yexian story is Hindu.

A Hindu-Buddhist Context of South and Southeast Asia

Tying Western fairy tales to Indic sources is neither new nor currently fashionable. As early as 1859, the German scholar T. Benfey held that fairy tales spread from India to both the East and the West, but Mary Brockington begins by stating "No longer is it a truth universally acknowledged that all fairy tales are of Indic Origin" (2003:239, 246). Her Austen-inspired irony is mild next to the scorn for this belief summoned by Stuart Blackburn: "The textual precision and ethnographic depth of [recent] studies, not to mention the increasing number of folktale indexes, have taken us far beyond the naiveté of those nineteenth-century claims for a Buddhist or mytho-poetic origin to virtually all folk narrative" (1996:494). Yet it is hardly naive to consider Hindu-Buddhist sources for a story told by the transnational Asian Zhuang in the ninth century.

Considering chronology, geography, and narrative, I suggest that the *Ramayana* provides a key cultural context to understanding the Yexian story recorded in China near the Vietnamese border c. 850. The full story of Sita, in continuous circulation in many forms since Valmiki's c. 500 BCE poem, and Yexian's story share key aspects of the "Cinderella" story: 1) rivalry among multiple wives and step-siblings; 2) a girl sent into exile and deprived of clothing signifying true identity; 3) a supernatural helper/messenger who appears in animal form to aid the woman; 4) the role of golden shoes; and 5) marriage to a king.

The spread of the Hindu *Ramayana* throughout Southeast Asia in the sixth through ninth centuries CE has been extremely well documented. Southern Vietnam had a temple dedicated to Valmiki in the seventh century. Northern Vietnam (Annam) considered itself the kingdom of Rama's father, Dasaratha (Desai 1970:9). In Cambodia, Khmer sculptors knew the story as early as the eighth century (Mehta 2004:323). Thailand's arts, religion, and kings have focused on the *Ramayana* since the Dvaravati Kingdom of the fourth to eighth centuries (Desai 1970:11). In the

[12] See Appendix B for a fuller discussion of the story of Bubo and analysis of this transformation of Garuda.

ninth century, transmission of the *Ramayana* extended to Java, culminating in the great Prambanan Hindu temple complex with its extensive set of *Ramayana* panels built c. 850 CE; an Old Javanese rendering of a Sanskrit version was recorded c. 870. *Ramayana* dance traditions in Thailand and Hindu Bali focus on Sita, and performances end with her being happily reunited with Rama.[13]

Part of the cultural difference between Southeast and East Asia has been routinely explained by the difference between Hindu and Buddhist religious/political/social thought spreading and evolving from Indian roots. That the Hindu *Ramayana* was known within the current boundaries of the People's Republic of China before the sixteenth century has been highly contested; the debate has focused not on Sita but on the monkey-king Hanuman who comes to her rescue. This scholarly debate (Dudbridge 1970:160-64, A. Yu 1977, and Mair 1989) has provided a wealth of information regarding the spread of the story of Sita's exile, recognition, and rescue in China.

The *Ramayana* story changed and spread through many genres. I suggest that the Yexian/ Cinderella story can be usefully compared to the "Dasaratha-Jataka" version of Sita's story. I first became interested in this Jataka story when I read "The Slippers of the King" in Florence Griswold's 1919 *Hindu Fairy Tales*. Griswold's version is a close paraphrase from E. B. Cowell's translation from the Pali Jataka (1957:78-82), yet Griswold's use of the terms "fairy tale" and "slippers" highlights the resemblance to "Cinderella." Jataka stories usually describe Buddha in a former life as a Bodhisattva appearing as an animal; the stories move quickly to resolution with the generous and compassionate rewarded and the greedy decisively punished. Unlike Valmiki's sprawling poem, Jataka stories have the length, ethics, and unity of the "Cinderella" fairy tale. It seemed possible that this particular Jataka story about Sita had circulated in China before c. 850 because other Jataka are illustrated on the Buddhist Dunhuang walls. This was confirmed in Mair's 1989 article where he translates a Chinese version of the "Dasaratha-Jataka" into English and explains that this story was first translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in 472 CE by Kimkarya and Tan Yao. Besides emphasizing a persecuting stepmother figure and symbolically identifying royal slippers, the Dasaratha-Jataka story of Sita departs from Valmiki's canonical poem by ending "happily ever after" with Sita and Rama's marriage, the norm of any Western "Cinderella" story.

The point, however, is not that this one translation written in 472 influenced the Yexian story recorded four hundred years later. Mair's discovery simply illustrates that the spreading *Ramayana* stories did not abruptly stop at the current border between North Vietnam, with its identification with Rama's father, and Guangxi Province, China. My hypothesis has been that the c. 850 Yexian story is an original creation of the Zhuang who combined ideas from their own traditions and experiences with motifs from more widely circulated stories. Beyond the Zhuang, the most powerful source of these shared motifs is Sita's story, conveyed primarily through oral storytelling or performance. Valmiki's version, c. 500 BCE, drew upon older stories that could have included a story that ends happily for Sita, as this Jataka story does. It is known that in Southeast Asia, an area that includes the transnational Zhuang, many oral versions and ritual performances of the *Ramayana* were circulating and transforming societies such as Java's in the

[13] See Mackerras 2007:49-51 for a summary of the early spread of "Hinduized states" in Southeast Asia.

ninth century. Mair supplies the evidence that the Jataka version of Sita-Rama-and-the-golden-slippers was translated into Chinese from Sanskrit in the 400s. The evidence, therefore, is much stronger that the Yexian motifs come directly from Hindu Indian narratives, perhaps via Vietnam, as opposed to coming indirectly from Egypt or Greece.

The following analysis considers the motifs that Sita and Yexian/Cinderella have in common and what basic differences are revealed. Note that I pay attention to different aspects of the story from those focused on by the Zhuang scholars. Embroidery, a blue dress, feathers, and a red fish, for example, disappear.

Multiple Wives

In the *Ramayana* the wicked stepmother figure is motivated by rivalry between first and secondary wives. Because the story concerns children of a king, the stakes are high; the mother of the heir gains prestige, power, and comfort while the other wife is much diminished along with her progeny. The Jataka story distills the story of how King Dasaratha has rashly promised his much younger secondary wife that her child Bharata will inherit the throne instead of his first wife's eldest son, Rama. Rama accepts exile and goes into a forest with Sita because he honors his father's promise. Yexian's father has two wives; the second wife has generally been translated as "stepmother." Earlier I interpreted the Yexian story as representing an indigenous people displaced by rash promises, secondary alliances, and greed, but here Yexian, like Rama, could represent any rightful heir when primogeniture is contested by human weakness.

The Helpful Animal

The story of Sita as it spread through Southeast Asia emphasizes the role of Hanuman (Mehta 2004:328, Kam 2000:123-64). In one of the most scholarly analyses of Hanuman, Robert Goldman and S. J. Sutherland Goldman argued that "the deepening atmosphere of despair and the cathartic joy of Hanuman and Sita are related slowly, lovingly, and with consummate skill by the poet; for they constitute the . . . emotional center of the epic itself" (1996:48). Hanuman is a god incarnate in animal form; as such, he can rescue the woman in her hour of need, when she is "beyond human help" (32). Hanuman constantly identifies himself as the "son of the wind-god Maruta" and has a supernatural ability to change size, but he also retains a monkey nature and a twitchy tail. Hanuman, not Rama, finds Sita after her abduction by Ravana, identifies her by an exchange of jeweled talismans, comforts her through human speech, and arranges for her deliverance. Hanuman's purpose is to unite a still virginal Sita with King Rama. Hanuman's role in the Yexian story can be said to be split between a "person with hair splayed across the shoulders and wearing coarse clothing who came down from the sky" (Mair 2005:365) and the small red carp. Only this rough-looking person can speak and give instructions to Yexian concerning the significance of the fishbones. As with Hanuman, this helper is an ambiguous mixture of human, animal, and divine. The unbound hair places the helper outside the boundaries of civilized society and even makes the gender unclear. Because the role of Hanuman seems to be filled with the person "who came down from the sky," the role of the red carp in the story

seems redundant. My analysis leads to the conclusion that there are two separate Hindu stories converging here, as has been stated.

The Tree

To keep Yexian away from the Festival, the stepmother orders her to guard "the fruit trees in the courtyard" (Mair 2005:365).[14] Later in the story, when Yexian returns from the Festival, the stepmother finds her asleep with her arms "wrapped around one of the fruit trees" (*idem*). In a pivotal *Ramayana* scene, Hanuman finds Sita in the grounds of Ravana's palaces in a garden "full of fruit that blossomed all year around" (R. and S. Goldman 1996:153); Hanuman talks from the branches while Sita sits under a flowering asoka tree.

Again, a quick comparison to Han Chinese literary tradition and to Zhuang realities in Guangxi is fruitful. The character famous for being ordered to protect fruit trees is the Monkey King of the sixteenth-century Chinese *Journey to the West*; to keep Monkey in his place the gods assign him to guard the "Garden of Immortal Peaches." Monkey resists hierarchy, takes off his "cap and robe," climbs trees and eats the peaches, then dresses himself and repeats "this device" for two or three days (A. Yu 1977:135-36). In Yexian's story, it is extraordinary that a young girl, not a monkey king, represents a disruptive force that successfully challenges hierarchy; with a change of clothing, Yexian disguises herself (or reveals her true identity) in order to pursue her desires.

While adherents to Jungian theories of archetypes, such as Joseph Campbell, would object to this diffusionist model and refer to ubiquitous symbolic trees associated with women, including Eve and the apple tree (1990:193-204), I would point out how much closer in spirit Yexian's story is to the *Ramayana* than to *Genesis.* Sita and Yexian escape a captive status; unlike Eve, these Asian women demonstrate an inner incorruptible goodness. For Sita and Yexian, the tree, offering shelter and comfort, is part of a benevolent universe; sex and fecundity are not blamed for sorrow and death in the world. On the other hand, within Asian traditions, there are basic distinctions to be made between Sita and Yexian. For instance, in the ninth century, the Zhuang story rewards the virtuous but law-breaking female protagonist while the Hindu worldview values most highly the male king who adheres to dharma.

Shoes and Identity

The most salient connection between *Ramayana* and the Yexian story lies with the symbolism of golden slippers. In his 1893 introduction to Marian Roalfe Cox's work, Andrew Lang penned the immortal line that no barefoot race could have invented the "Cinderella" story, a funny as well as condescending statement (Schaefer 2003:138-39). However, feet as the site of royal power and identity form a motif even in the full Indian Valmiki version of the sixth century BCE; Lakshmana, who does not gaze at Sita fully, identifies her through her anklets. In "Anklets Away: The Symbolism of Jewellery and Ornamentation in Valmiki's Ramayana," Sutherland Goldman notes that when Ravana carries Sita away, her "jewel-studded anklet was shaken from

[14] Other translators use the word "garden" instead of "courtyard" (Waley 1963:150, Reed 2001:112).

her foot and gently tinkling it fell like an arc of lightning," and Sutherland Goldman suggests that Sita deliberately lets her anklet fall so that Rama can trace her (2003:160).

The Jataka story puts slippers in a central position. The story has its peaceful resolution when Rama's half-brother, Bharata, seeks him in exile; Rama refuses to return before the term of his exile expires, and Bharata returns only with Rama's slippers: "For three years the slippers ruled the kingdom. The courtiers placed the straw slippers upon the royal throne, when they judged a cause. If the cause were decided wrongly, the slippers beat upon each other" (Cowell 1957:82). Thus the slippers stand for Rama's identity and for his royal status, supernaturally affirmed. While the Jataka version doesn't call Rama's sandals "golden," Valmiki's *Ramayana* has Bharata say, "My brother himself gave me the kingship as a trust—it is these gold-trimmed slippers that will guarantee its welfare and security . . . . O that I might soon see the feet of Rama Raghava placed within these slippers, tying them on once again with my own hands" (Pollock 1986:314).[15] The story of Rama's golden shoes suggests one interpretation of why the identifying slipper remains such a key talisman of the "Cinderella" story. Identification of the "true ruler" reestablishes a positive universal balance and equilibrium.

Contrasting the Jataka and Yexian Stories

While I am suggesting that the similarities among the Asian stories I discuss stem from cultural interaction and transformation, the process of comparison also highlights significantly different world views involving class, politics, gender, and conceptions of self. While Yexian's father was a leader to his group, the family appears marginalized economically, and Yexian's menial work seems a harsh extension of a child's workload. The *Ramayana* story about the high stakes of political decisions of a powerful king has been adapted to a different scenario of extreme poverty where the stakes are those of survival. The story rewards Yexian by making her the first wife of a king, but it seems ambivalent about the founding of a divinely sanctioned royal line, and it does not value hierarchy, obedience, and duty. These conflicting messages allow the story to flourish later in both monarchies and democracies.

The other striking difference, of course, has to do with gender. In Valmiki's Hindu version of the *Ramayana,* Sita is strong-willed and smart but needs to prove her innocence by a trial through fire, and she leaves the world of the living after further accusations. Even in the "Dasaratha-Jataka" story, where Sita ends up as queen, the focus is on the males, King Dasaratha and his sons, Rama and Bharata. Many of the hundreds of Jataka stories are misogynistic; wives and daughters are put in their place after revealing false pride and a desire to change class (Cowell 1957:iii, no. 306:13-15 and no. 309:19). The story of Yexian is much different. Before help appears out of the blue, Yexian seems totally alone in the universe; unlike Sita's situation, there is no one who cares and searches for her. Yet out of this desolation come new connections, initiative, and hope. When Sita ventures beyond a circle of male protection, she is snatched away, threatened, and hidden. When Yexian moves into the wilderness, she discovers ways to improve

[15] Robert Goldman has also given a lecture showing artistic representations of Rama's "golden" slippers (2007).

her own life and the lives of her people. The figure with the disheveled hair and torn clothes is her own image, and it is with a female identity, heritage, and knowledge that she rescues herself.

Studies of Asian concepts of selfhood in relationship to political ideology should contemplate Yexian's story. In parts of Asia outside of Guangxi, stories such as Sita's were maintained in kingdoms that re-created the palace walls, the courtyards, and the gardens that contained as well as protected women whose role it was to perpetuate a royal, divinely sanctioned lineage. In India, China, and Japan, elite women became held within iron boxes of social expectation. In the Hindu and Confucian worlds, identity still resides in multiple family roles and obligations. But in Tang Dynasty Zhuang territory, there seemed to be a space for a different type of woman, a different type of person. This girl finds a creature of beauty and independently nurtures it herself, hidden from others; she demonstrates kindness; she finds new ideas "out of the blue," demands to go to a festival, leaves home to travel to an island kingdom beyond the sea, becomes the first wife of a powerful king, and there we leave her in this version of this story. In the Greek world, there is no one like her: in contrast, the walls of Troy, Ithaca, and Thebes enclose and entomb Helen, Penelope, and Antigone.

There are additional resonant narratives from India, China, and Southeast Asia, including those from various minority groups, more than can be commented upon here. I consider Sita's and Manu's stories, however, the most significant ones because Hindu texts brought cultural and political change throughout Southeast Asia in the ninth century. China's resistance to the *Ramayana* narrative is part of China's resistance to becoming a Hinduized/ Buddhist state in the later Tang Dynasty; in the eighth and ninth centuries, politically powerful Sogdians, Uighurs, and Tibetans were Buddhist; Han Chinese resistance to theocracy culminated in the destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries in the 840s.

Yexian's story is full of motifs that the story does not explain, a quality quite compatible with a Zhuang storyteller who is not Hindu and a Han Chinese story-collector who writes down the story after hearing it once.The story appears strange and mysterious because it is so crowded with fish, slippers, gold, pearls, and trees; like the flying stones, we do not know what direction they are coming from. It becomes dreamlike in its quick juxtaposition of sharp resonant images. But the spirit of this story and the dreams for women are quite different from the Indian and Chinese worlds described in earlier epics and later prose fiction. This paper suggests that the Zhuang experience in the Tang Dynasty made the difference in this interval of time and space.

The Han Chinese World

The Han Chinese world is full of its own explorations of ethical dilemmas, fantasies, persecuted heroines, and even marvelous red fish. One needs to consider the Han Chinese context because the Zhuang informant Li Shiyuan lived in an area dominated by Han culture and Duan Chengshi had to choose Chinese words to write down the story. Some believe all folklore collections are powerfully shaped by the collector-writer (Philip 1989:1), yet the linguistic evidence and jumps and gaps in the story make it appear that Duan wrote the story down as it was told rather than shaping it to suit his own literary goals. Carrie Reed characterizes the sum of the tales collected by Duan Chengshi as belonging to the Tang *chuanqi* genre due to their

"language style, literary embellishments or flourishes, particular kinds of standard introductions and conclusions, complicated narrator viewpoint, dramatic irony, stock character types, complexity of the treatment of time passage, common plot patterns, and their primary benign or benevolent human-like supernatural element" (2003:6). In my view, much of this characterization fits the Yexian story, and analyzing the Yexian story in the context of the "Nuogao ji" sections of Duan's miscellany should be the focus of further study.

Within the Han Chinese literary world involving riches, waywardness, and romantic love, there is a very famous poem that extends into East Asia a genre concerning an emperor who falls in love with a young beautiful woman and breaks tradition by elevating her quickly above all other wives; this genre would include tales of King Dasaratha and Yexian's king, but also stories of the real Emperor Xuanxong of the Tang Dynasty and a fictional Emperor of Japan. In 806 Bai Juyi (Po Chu-i, 772-846) wrote "Song of Lasting Pain" (Stephen Owen's 1996 translation of the title; Waley (1929/1993) uses "Song of Everlasting Sorrow"); the poem was so immediately and widely popular that Duan Chengshi and his servant Li Shiyuan could easily have known it. The poem imaginatively tells the history of Emperor Xuanxong's Prized Consort, Yang Guifei, who was blamed for the An Lushan Rebellion of 755 and executed. She had risen through the ranks of court women in rags-to-riches fashion to the position of *guifei* ("prized consort"), which would be the equivalent of Yexian's status of "primary wife"; her quick rise upset the established order among the Emperor's women. Angela Palandri, writing about Bai Juyi's friend Yuan Chen, reports that in 806 the problem of women being sought out in China and "snatched from their homes" to be part of the Emperor's harem was an issue that scholar-literati-bureaucrats such as Yuan Chen were attempting to redress through political poetry (1977:8). While such a detail may explain why a poor local woman gets sent to a court, the Yexian story is romanticized and not a complaint. Yexian's marriage to the king, in itself, rewards rather than hurts her.

For Bai Juyi, a key identifying symbol is Yang Guifei's "kingfisher wing" hair ornament that falls when she is killed, kingfisher quilts that covered her and the emperor; her leitmotif melody is "Coats of Feathers/Rainbow Skirts" (Owen 1996:442-47).[16] Bai Juyi's poem ends by treating Yang Guifei as a local semi-divine deity.[17] If one accepts the translation of kingfisher feathers, the Yexian story becomes one of a "heavenly maiden" revealed, not a Zhuang girl with a heavenly blue dress created from her group's expertise in dying and sewing. The kingfisher image comes out of the Han Chinese tradition; by the second century the kingfisher was "symbolic of all gentle but persecuted beings" (Kroll 1984:240). While the *Ramayana* establishes a template for the story of a beloved royal consort—Sita, beset by difficulties—the romantic Yang Guifei legend flourished in China after 807, creating room for a new genre.

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[16] T. H. Barrett gives evidence of an association between this melody, Bai Juyi's poem, and performances of the "Cinderella" story (1999:5). The kingfisher hairpin became so identified with Yang Guifei that Murasaki explicitly refers to Yang Guifei's kingfisher pin in the c. 1000 *The Tale of Genji* (Waley 1929/1993:15). When my guide from Nanning, Si Yu Chen, read the Yexian story, she associated the "kingfisher feathers" with Yang Guifei and told me about a local tradition from a village near Nanning; Yang's apocryphal craving for lichee nuts was attributed to lichee nuts from this village. Although histories contradict this idea about Yang Guifei's birthplace, her notorious relative, Yang Guozhong, was blamed for losing the southwestern territories. Lady Yang's execution during the An Lushan was due to her historical intercession to keep Yang Guozhong in charge of the area including Guangxi (Backus 1981:72-77).

[17] See Stevens 1990 on the Chinese process of deification.

The second resonant story, to which Jameson (1932:91) refers, is told in the famous sixteenth-century *Journey to the West* where Kuangji releases a golden carp for sale when it blinks its eyes in a strange manner (C. Yu 2001). Later the River Dragon King states: "As the common saying goes, 'Kindness should be repaid by kindness.' I must save his life today so that I may repay the kindness of yesterday . . . . The golden carp that you released was myself and you are my benefactor" (202). The resemblance is not only that the small golden carp grows into the mighty River Dragon King, but that the moral of the story supports reciprocal kindness. Later the Emperor "Tai-tsung" is involved with the River Dragon King and also tries to repay kindness with kindness.

When one looks for pictorial witness within the Han tradition, again evidence surfaces after the Tang Dynasty. There is a beautiful extant scroll from 1075 by Liu Cai, now called "Fish Swimming and Falling Flowers." The painting has been described as follows: "Suddenly, a brilliant orange goldfish appears, then jade green leaves and more goldfish, as the composition comes to a close with the appearance of the patriarchal figures in this watery world, several huge carp who appear to the lesser fishes we have seen as kings to their kingdom" (Xin et al. 1997:118). The painting comes from a series called "Dragons and Fish," but the authors comment that no dragon pictures are extant before the thirteenth century. I would suggest that there are dragons in this picture, and they appear as the "huge" carp that resemble kings. The setting appears to be an artificial pond with lily pads floating on top. Liu Cai is called the first painter of fish as "living, moving forms" (118). The painting is 150 years after the Yexian story was recorded c. 850, and from the Southern Song; it testifies to the early history of fish as protected aesthetic objects in the broader Han Chinese culture after, but not before, the Tang Dynasty.

When one compares the extent to which the Yexian story may have grown out of Han Chinese sources or Hindu sources, the evidence gathered here demonstrates that the Hindu cultural realm is the more important source. Bai Juyi's story of Yang Guifei, a persecuted royal heroine discovered by a leaping supernatural being and identified by a jewel after her death (as Hanuman identifies Sita), resonates with Sita's story more than Yexian and Yang Guifei resonate with one another. Kingfisher feathers are associated with Yang Guifei and Yexian, but this could be because Duan Chengshi in c. 850 knew the Bai Juyi poem of 806 and chose the Chinese character for kingfisher to describe a shade of blue. Duan's miscellany does include one anecdote about Yang Guifei, but that is about chess rather than kingfisher feathers (Reed 2003:81). One notes that the cape/blouse/dress of feathers is not part of other Asian "Cinderella" stories that Ting, for example, prints or summarizes, nor does it appear in European versions. The resemblance between Yexian's story and stories embedded in the later Han Chinese *Journey to the West* also is connected to Hindu sources; Yexian's story may be a stepping stone to stories in the much later *Journey to the West,* but because the Han literary tradition has been scoured for precedents to stories of "Monkey," we know that before 850 CE there were virtually no similar Han Chinese indigenous stories. In sorting out the strands of Hindu, Han Chinese, and Zhuang contributions to the Yexian story, one other cultural tradition needs to be explored, that of Buddhist-Han Chinese tradition.

A Buddhist Interpretation

My return to Buddhism after the Han Chinese section is deliberate. By the ninth century, Buddhism had evolved, diversified, and been "Sinicized" for approximately seven hundred years. The *Lotus Sutra* was first translated into Chinese in 406 and contains the story of the "Daughter of the Dragon-King," which demonstrates that a woman can reach enlightenment, and a section that has been called the "Guanyin Sutra" (de Bary and Bloom 1999:453-55). A possible connection between Yexian and an evolving worship of a feminine Guanyin enriches the Yexian story. I should note, however, that the Zhuang scholars I interviewed quickly cut off a discussion of such a Buddhist interpretation.

Figure 2. A niche with a statue identified as a Tang Dynasty Guanyin. The niche is at the base of Elephant Hill, which has the remains of a Buddhist pagoda on the top. The statue was said to be moved to this location after the original Tang Dynasty statue was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76).

The Zhuang retain their own animist and ancestor beliefs as part of their non-Sinitic identity. In addition, Buddhism has been attacked in waves since the Chinese government's destruction of monasteries in 841-46; both Confucian and Communist ideology have maintained antipathy to Buddhism, with many Buddhist artifacts being destroyed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Nonetheless, a Buddhist interpretation is fruitful because of the story's values, the history of Buddhism in Guangxi, and the development of Buddhism both during the Tang Dynasty and in the tenth-century Song Dynasty, after this story was collected. The Dunhuang caves show gracefully feminine Bodhisattvas in the eighth century (Tan 1994:151), before Duan Chengshi collected the Yexian story. Duan Chengshi's miscellany was full of both Buddhist and Daoist lore and legend, and he was sympathetic to both traditions (Reed 2003:48).

There are clear signs in and around Guilin that Buddhism centered on Guanyin had been strong and is re-emerging. In Guilin, public parks preserve sacred ground; in Seven-Star Park there is now a rebuilt Buddhist temple. Another famous enclave is Elephant Hill, which has an old (but not Tang Dynasty) stone pagoda at the top. There is an altar cut into the hill and in the altar stands Guanyin.

This statue was said to have been moved to this location from another site to replace a Tang Dynasty statue smashed in the Cultural Revolution. What was most interesting was the small pool set among rocks directly under Guanyin. In the pool swam small bright red goldfish.

Figure 3. Directly below the Guanyin statue in Figure 2 is a "Pond of Mercy" where small red fish are currently released to acquire good luck.

The guide Si Yu Chen explained that this was "A Pool of Mercy" and that Buddhists currently bought the fish to release here to gain the compassion of Guanyin. Si Yu Chen reported that her mother followed this practice in her village outside Nanning; Ms. Chen was also aware of a "Pool of Mercy" at Hangzhou.[18]

A related artifact was discovered while walking up to the Zhuang terraced rice paddies of Yangshuo where the Zhuang have raised fish for 1200 years, that is, since the time Yexian's story was told c. 850. In a vendor's stall an amulet was for sale, a small red carp. The amulet opened, and carved on one side was a figure of the compassionate Bodhisattva Guanyin. Carved into the

[18] For an account of the beginnings of the Buddhist "Pools of Mercy" in the tenth century, see Balon 2004:17.

Figure 4. Amulets bought on the steps leading up to the Yongshuo terraced rice paddies. The seller explained that one carving inside shows a Bodhisattva Guanyin figure; the other side shows a child. The current amulets are made of inexpensive plastic, but a magnifying glass shows a feminized Guanyin figure.

inside of the other half of the fish was a small child that the Guanyin was said to protect (Figure 4).

It is difficult for me not to connect this talisman with the interpretation of the Yexian fish as an embodiment of Guanyin. The Jataka tales, as we have seen, tell the story of a bodhisattva entering an animal to help humankind. One might be particularly grateful to a fish, when, living on hills that seem able to produce nothing, raising and eating fish from terraced pools allows one to safely bear, nurse, and rear healthy children.

After forming a hypothesis that the Yexian story evolved in China into stories of a feminine Guanyin because of these artifacts viewed in 2007, I read Chun-Fang Yu's *Kuan-yin: The Chinese Transformation of Avalokitesvara* (2001). In searching for the origins of this feminine Bodhisattva, Yu finds that the earliest stories of the feminine Guanyin are found in China with "a woman carrying a fish-basket" (419-38). It should be remembered that children carried carp "fingerlings" in " bamboo baskets," as I have noted (Balon 2004:3). The story recorded in tenth-century China tells of a beautiful but humble young woman who asks her suitors to learn the Lotus Sutra and who dies before consummating any marriage; by the end of the story the people realize she was the Bodhisattva Guanyin. A version told in Japan keeps the

story closer to the Yexian/Cinderella narrative: "Originally a girl of T'ang China, who was selling fish on the market. She asked Kannon Bosatsu to grant her a wish for a good husband. The wish was granted and later the girl itself was seen as an incarnation of Kannon Bosatsu" (Daruma Museum website). During the Ming Dynasty, a story published between 1573 and 1615 associates a Fishbasket Guanyin with a goldfish in a pond that can turn into a monster, which Guanyin turns back into a fish (C. Yu 2001:432).

What do we learn from Chun-fang Yu's research that enriches our understanding of the Yexian story in Asian contexts? Yu's interpretation of the Fishbasket Guanyin story emphasizes that the girl is humble; anyone could be a savior in disguise, and therefore one should be kind to everyone. The Buddhism evolving from the Lotus Sutra preaches universal salvation very different indeed from the Hindu caste system that considers wealthy men to be closer to salvation than poor or low-status people such as menial workers and women. In one strand of Buddhism, a simple woman's compassion is more valuable than a king's righteous rule. Again, as with the examination of other stories and images circulating in Han China, it is striking that stories and statues of Fishbasket Guanyin flourish *after* the ninth century, not before the Yexian story. If the story draws upon Hindu religious stories such as "Manu and the Fish" and "Rama and Sita," it develops in China and spreads to Japan in a Buddhist context.

The Yexian story illustrates the ethics of the Buddhist "Great Compassion Dharani Sutra," whose popularity spread in the Tang Dynasty along with belief in the Guanyin Bodhisattva (C. Yu 2001:273-75). The following evocative passage illuminates the Yexian story: "If the Mantra-holder dwells and sleeps alone in an uninhabited mountain or wilderness, those virtuous gods will guard him by turns to eliminate misfortunes. If the Mantra-holder loses his way deep in the mountain and recites this Mantra, the virtuous gods and dragon-kings will transform themselves into virtuous people and tell him the correct way" (Chen Silfong 2007:9). The Yexian story gives narrative form to the symbolic connection between the human and the divine at a time of anguish. Mair translates the key phrase in the Yexian story as "she wept in the wilderness" (2005:365), a word choice that sounds Biblical (see Isaiah 40) but also evokes the language of this sutra, for Yexian figuratively dwells alone in an uninhabited "wilderness." In the Zhuang world, gods and dragon-kings interact, and if in the story of Bubo gods and dragons get chased and their whiskers pulled, in the Yexian story gods and dragons appear as a rough person from the sky and a very small fish and offer solace in the midst of the terrors and loneliness life may offer.

It should not be necessary to emphasize that the Lotus Sutra and the Great Compassion Dharani Sutra are Asian texts; the evidence here supports the contention that the origins of the Yexian/Cinderella story lie in Asia, defined as east of Afghanistan, not in Biblical lands or texts further west. To say that the Yexian story resonates with stories of a female Guanyin who rewards compassion is not to deny resemblances to other religious traditions. Chun-fang Yu notes that eventually the female Guanyin is pictured in statues that resemble Madonna and child; these statues are taken back to Italy in the sixteenth century by Jesuits because of the resemblance. Both Christianity and Mahayana Buddhism spread their religious messages through parables; the narratives spread widely because the hope they offer is not restricted to the lucky or the strong. Buddhism and Confucianism both value reciprocal kindness; the Confucian term "ren" is traditionally translated as benevolence. But the conclusion is not warranted that the

Yexian/Cinderella story could have emerged from any world religion regardless of time and place.

The Zhuang Yexian and the European Cinderella

Since my intent is to put the Yexian story in an Asian context, I am hesitant to turn from Yexian to her many younger "Cinderella" sisters in the West. I do hope this Asian analysis will provoke more research into the Zhuang context and history. Yet because many readers may be primarily curious about the connections, I offer the following:

First, it should be reiterated that the Yexian story has been accepted as a complete example of "Cinderella" Type 501A; this paper has demonstrated that the Zhuang story contains the motifs Cox (1893) and Aarne-Thompson (in Dundes 1982:vii) delineated for a story to be in this category: ill-treated stepdaughter, fairy godmother, fancy dress, banquet, identification through a shoe, and triumphant marriage. Further, after Anna Birgitta Rooth's work there is growing acceptance that connections among stories with this degree of shared motifs are ones of diffusion (*ibid.*:xv). One of the earliest "Cinderella" Type 501A stories to be recorded in Europe is Giambattista Basile's, published between 1634 and 1636 in Naples. Basile's story begins as a doting father hires a tutor to teach his daughter "small chain work, open sewing, hem work and fringes" (Zipes 2001:444). Part of the otherworldly aspect of the European story is that such details seem random, for sewing is never mentioned again; Yexian's golden shoe, no longer soft as dawn, becomes for Basile "iron drawn to a magnet" when it flies to the girl's foot (449). Another transformation occurs when the reference to a kingfisher, commonly translated as "halcyon" (meaning peaceful) in Europe, appears as a dove in Basile's story. In both cases, words that could signify simply colors (gold and blue) are taken literally as metal and bird by the European storyteller, as they are by many translators of the Yexian story into English. These parallels in motifs, narrative arc, and odd detail (such as the need to have a heroine who can sew) make it very likely that the Zhuang version influenced the European stories. It is not a single transmission, however, because details in Yexian's story (the golden slipper, for example) appear in the later Grimm version but not in Basile, and so on.

The question then becomes, if the seminal version was written down in China c. 850, why does "Cinderella" Type 501A begin to spread in Europe after the 1650s? In the 1580s there was a new woodblock printing of Duan Chengshi's miscellany, *Youyang zazu* (Reed 2003:40 and 2001:3-4); because the *Youyang zazu* contained many fantastic stories of the "strange," the book was popular in China and many copies are extant from the 1580s onward, including a 1608 copy in Tokyo (Reed 2003:32). Chieko Irie Mulhern believes that the upsurge in "Cinderella" stories in Japan can be traced to Japanese-speaking Italian Jesuits between 1570 and 1614 (Mulhern 1985:2). Mulhern even guesses that they might have spread the story from the Duan Chengshi version. Jesuits were clearly in China as early as 1552 when the Spanish Jesuit St. Francis Xavier lived a year on the Chinese island of Shangchuan off the south coast of China. Matteo Ricci and other Italian Jesuits, who read Chinese well, were in China after 1582. I do not believe, however, that Jesuits alone could have told the Yexian story to Basile, since in his hands it loses the theme of compassion and becomes bawdy (iron to magnet, indeed). This chronological evidence,

however, does suggest one simple and possible answer as to how a Tang Dynasty story could have reached Europe by the 1630s: by boat. By the early seventeenth century, many Italian sailors, merchants, and other travelers, including Jesuits, could easily have had access to these tales from a coastal area or from the Chinese capital via printed versions. The transmission to a port such as Venice or Naples, with the story retold in many different ways, is a totally logical surmise.

Concluding Reflections

This paper suggests that the Yexian/Cinderella story has resonated in many cultures around the world because it draws upon symbols, motifs, and narrative actions honed by a number of Asian cultures over centuries. The story is from a borderland, a dividing point between China and Vietnam, between East Asia and Southeast Asia, and between areas that adopted, adapted, or resisted Buddhist or Hindu religious and political ideology. Northrop Frye (1974) has discussed the power of "secular scriptures," a term he created to convey the power of popular narratives, specifically fairy tales, to shape beliefs, attitudes, and actions in the West. In order to recognize its powerful Eastern origins, the Yexian story should be considered a secular sutra. But I am not simply concluding that the story embeds the different Hindu, Zhuang, Han Chinese, and Buddhist traditions equally.

It is true that the Asian contexts provide alternate possibilities: problems with rivalries among wives and their children could come from the culturally dominant *Ramayana* or from stories of the displaced and impoverished Zhuang or from the Han Chinese court of Yang Guifei; the lost golden slipper could be taken either from stories of Sita's lost anklet and Rama's golden sandals or merely from the excellent slippers made by Zhuang women with their golden thread; the red-finned carp with golden eyes is either a variant of stories of Manu, Hanuman, Buddhist, and Jataka stories of a Bodhisattva incarnate, or it is simply a small fish caught by a young Zhuang girl who changed a region's economy through her nurture. The lovely blue dress is either made of flashing kingfisher feathers described in famous Han-Chinese romantic narratives of imperial love, or it is simply the product of superlative Zhuang dying techniques. Wherever the king came from—a mythical land such as Ravana's Lanka, a local Chinese island, or across the South China Sea—there is no reason to consider this king not an integral representative of Asia's literary/religious tradition or its geographical realm.

It is possible that these interpretations fit together as pieces in one puzzle rather than as competing interpretations, giving different perspectives that enrich the story. At the center of this puzzle, I place the Zhuang storyteller. My hypothesis holds that there are three or four separate story strands combined in the Yexian story. The first two, I believe, have roots in Hindu religious narratives: the *Manu* story emphasizes a fish, reciprocal rescue of those who are compassionate, and a flood washing away the hard-hearted. The second *Ramayana* story concerns a stepmother who prefers her biological child over the husband's first child; the stepchild's neglect is marked by a loss of clothing except for golden footwear that leads to recognition by a god in the form of an animal, and to royal marriage. Both of these stories justify monarchy by demonstrating that the king or queen are both moral and divine. These two Hindu stories could have combined

before entering Zhuang territory; they are at least one thousand years older than the Yexian Tang Dynasty story.

What is missing from this combined story that the Yexian ninth-century story provides, giving the "Cinderella" story such popularity and power? A third story entails a poor girl reaching maturity who wants to go to a festival to gain a good husband and have a full, enjoyable life. She is told to do chores at home, but she produces a beautiful blue dress, tricks her parent, runs off, and stuns everyone in sight. This satisfying story, I suggest, is not from India or from Han China. What are the crucial components that the Zhuang contributed? These contributions are more significant than the details of sewing, blue dye, golden thread, fit of shoe, or festival that the Zhuang claim as cultural markers. The Zhuang contributions are essential to the story's popularity, especially in counterpoint to dominant world religions, whether Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, or Judeo-Christian.

The first significant Zhuang contribution would be to make the Yexian/Cinderella story secular. There are no direct references to Bodhisattva or a god. That the Zhuang scholars immediately dismissed Buddhist interpretations is a strong indicator that the loss of an explicit religious tradition occurred in Zhuang territory among a people who have resisted hegemonic religions and maintained animist and ancestor beliefs for the past few thousand years. Something we call magic replaces institutionalized religion in this story—the supernatural elements are surprising, puzzling, odd, entertaining, delightful, and gratifying. They are not explained by a coherently structured ideology within the story.

The second point is that the Yexian story ends with royal marriage but does not justify royal government—the kingdom is elsewhere, the king and queen do not rule over the home territory, and the king is greedy. The Zhuang of Guangxi not only resisted Hindu and Buddhist religions; they also resisted imperial, divine rule justified by ideologies backed by the Chinese "Mandate of Heaven" or Rama's dharma. Marriage to the "king" in the Yexian story serves only to rescue the girl from poverty and loneliness and to recognize her goodness. Rama, Sita, and Manu are royal by birth; Yexian may have been a tribal leader's daughter, but this story values the working class more than the aristocracy.

The third major point that recurs in my paper relates to gender. Manu and Rama are exemplars of morality and the centers of their Hindu stories (regardless of how fascinating Sita may be to many). Here the point of view shifts to a woman's worldview—it is a woman's loss of parents, her goodness, her sorrow, her rescue, her resourcefulness, her willful refusal to stay home, her activity, and her triumph. In the same time period that the Bodhisattva figure becomes female in the larger East Asian region, here the guardian figure who comes out of the blue, the "witch" as the Zhuang scholars would have it, appears to be female and perhaps a real living person with some pragmatic counsel about fishbones. The reciprocal compassion that the story endorses is generational; the "Cinderella" of today becomes the "fairy godmother" of tomorrow. The possibility of being a cruel stepmother is countered by another female role—that of generous, benevolent caregiver—not because she is the biological mother or even grandmother, but because she responds to the sorrow of another just as a child responds spontaneously and saves a small animal. Among many Zhuang stories women seem to be the protagonists, the moral center, the singers, and the storytellers.

The fourth point is the optimism in this story. I recently heard a presenter at an academic conference confidently overgeneralize that significant world "myths" explain human suffering, the tragic human condition. This story, however, is comic rather than tragic, of spring rather than winter, and of youth instead of maturity or old age. For the girl the story ends triumphantly; the story affirms joy of living—joy in clothing, festival, or husband. The Zhuang live along Peach Blossom River; their stories seem utopian; they play as well as work; they valorize fishing and farming. They value the aesthetics of their landscape and their visual arts.

My final point has to do with the delight in the beauty of the little fish with golden eyes and a red dorsal fin. The Zhuang live in a natural world where the border between human and animal is blurred, especially in creatures of the water. These precious fish represent the girl, her dead mother, and her god-mother (shaman or witch), who comes to her rescue. The fish is the symbol of female fertility with the baby inside it. The importance of semi-domesticated red carp emerged in Zhuang territory, and in the century when this story was told, certain red carp became taboo. The Manu story supplies the narrative sequence of raising the fish, but Manu's fish is not lovely.

I suggest that these five points have much to do with the popularity of the Yexian/ Cinderella story: the protagonist is secular, everyday, female, adolescent, virginal, lonely, kind-hearted, a lover of animals and of beautiful things. To be Cinderella she must live happily ever after in this world, not in an afterlife. Such a story can retain its popularity on the margins of any culture because it does not ostensibly threaten a dominant religion, but what kind of culture would have created it? Regardless of what analogues might have existed and been on the move in other parts of the world, the Zhuang of the Tang Dynasty fit the requisite attributes. My thesis is that it is time that we acknowledge the Zhuang as primary creators of the "Cinderella" story as the world now knows it.

What might be more controversial than my account of the genesis of the Yexian/ Cinderella story is the indication that various Buddhist and Han Chinese beliefs, stories, and practices prominent after the ninth century in China incorporated motifs from this Zhuang tale. In the many scientific articles of aquaculture, scholars associate the Zhuang's raising of red Oujiang carp with Buddhist Ponds of Mercy and with the raising of Koi and goldfish. No aquaculturalist, however, associated Zhuang's techniques of raising red carp, Ponds of Mercy, Koi, and goldfish with the Yexian story, nor has any folklorist or literary critic. The Zhuang scholars of Nanning did not make this association, perhaps because they are university professors in a city and are not Buddhist and do not associate Buddhism with being Zhuang. Han Chinese do not associate the lucky red carp with any Indian religion; they refer to the story of Yangzi River sturgeon or Yellow River carp struggling upstream—red is a lucky *Chinese* color. Han Chinese stories of a dragon becoming a little fish and then returning as a jovial Dragon King, as in *Journey to the West*, are seen as quintessentially Chinese, with some dragons symbolizing the Emperor. I don't think it will be easily accepted that the story of Yexian transformed into stories of the Fishbasket Guanyin.

I suggest two different trajectories for the Yexian story in China. The first trajectory follows a written text. It is clear from Carrie Reed's research that the c. 850 version remained intact because Duan Chengshi recorded it in classical Chinese, and one printed copy led to another. In the second, oral trajectory, I conclude that the story diverges into many paths. One

oral tradition leads to stories of the Fishbasket Guanyin, eventually old, unattractive, and willing to maim herself to benefit others.[19] A different oral tradition leads to the youthful, egotistical, mischievous Monkey-King. In the sixteenth century Yexian's story and the Monkey-King's *Journey to the West* were both available throughout China in published books with wide circulation. The Yexian version written in Chinese maintained the "Cinderella" Type 501A at the same time as other versions, labeled Catskin or Cap o' Rushes, diverged and developed other themes through oral transmission in Asia and/or Europe. Type 501A remains more of a morality tale: if one acts humanely, spontaneously, and simply, even when the world seems a desolate wilderness, one will be rewarded with all the beauty the world can bestow. Regardless of what happened to the story after the Tang Dynasty, the evidence I have analyzed supports Duan Chengshi's assertion that his source was Li Shiyuan, and I believe that the c. 850 story reflects the history, concerns, and cultural interactions in Guangxi Province during the Tang Dynasty.

If any ethnic group, however, has lived in isolation, it was not the Zhuang of Guangxi in the Tang Dynasty; they were connected to cultural centers north, south, east, and west by routes well traveled by traders, armies, bureaucrats, poets, and monks. My theory is that the Zhuang created this story out of their values, needs, experiences, and delights, weaving a tapestry with story-threads that reached their shores directly or indirectly from India by the ninth century. Tang Dynasty politics—including women such as Yang Guifei becoming consorts at the Tang Dynasty capital of Xi'an and the economic stresses emanating from a wealthy powerful court—made the story relevant. I further suggest that much later in the sixteenth century a Westerner on board a ship learned this story at a time when Chinese were talking about a new, printed edition of the ninth-century written Yexian story. After that boatload of European sailors, Jesuits, or merchants reached home, the story quickly embarked to new destinations, spreading from Italy throughout Europe and the world. "Fairy tale" is now used pejoratively to mean something that is false. How different is a world view where acts of compassion lead to happiness? Paraphrasing Zhuangzi, it is only when we stand on the bank of the river that we know the happiness of fish. "Cinderella" may be a story of universal appeal, but we should be able to see Yexian from the point of view, from a riverbank, of the Zhuang.

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[19] The "Fishbasket Guanyin" stories diminished in popularity; I accept Ting's conclusion that the Duan Chengshi version led to the variety of oral stories collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries throughout Asia; transmission of these variant oral stories could have moved gradually through the Middle East to Europe as Rooth concluded, but this does not explain why there are no written "Cinderella" stories in any of its variants written down in the Middle East and Europe between the hints in Strabo's first-century version and Basile's "La Gatta Cenerentola" of 1634. This paper cannot encompass the study of all the European and Middle Eastern versions that Anna Birgitta Rooth mapped so rigorously in the 1950s (see Dundes 1982:129-47), but I would suggest that a proliferation of "Cinderella" variants spread from European ports after 1550.

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Appendix A[20]

Among the people of the south there is a tradition that before the Ch'in and Han dynasties there was a cave-master called Wu. The aborigines called the place the Wu cave. He married two wives. One wife died. She had a daughter Yeh-hsien, who from childhood was intelligent and good at making [pottery on the wheel]. Her father loved her. After some years the father died, and she was ill-treated by her stepmother, who always made her collect firewood in dangerous places and draw water from deep pools.

She once got a fish about two inches long, with red fins and golden eyes. She put it into a bowl of water. It grew bigger every day, and after she had changed the bowl several times she could find no bowl big enough for it, so she threw it into the back pond. Whatever food was left over from meals she put it into the water to feed it. When she came to the pond, the fish always exposed its head and pillowed it on the bank; but when anyone else came, it did not come out. The stepmother knew about this, but when she watched for it, it did not once appear. She tricked the girl, saying, "Haven't you worked hard! I am going to give you a new dress." She then made the girl change out of her tattered clothing. Afterwards she sent her to get water from another spring and reckoning that it was several hundred leagues, the stepmother at her leisure put on her daughter's clothes, hid a sharp blade up her sleeve, and went to the pond. She called to the fish. The fish at once put its head out, and she chopped it off and killed it. The fish was now more than ten feet long. She served it up and it tasted twice as good as an ordinary fish. She left the bones under the dung-hill.

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[20] The following translation of the Yexian story is from Waley 1963:147-62.

Next day, when the girl came to the pond, no fish appeared. She howled with grief in the open countryside, and suddenly there appeared a man with his hair loose over his shoulders and coarse clothes. He came down from the sky. He consoled her, saying, "Don't howl! Your stepmother had killed the fish and its bones are under the dung. You go back, take the fish's bones and hide them in your room. Whatever you want, you have only to pray to them for it. It is bound to be granted." The girl followed his advice, and was able to provide herself with gold, pearls, dresses and food whenever she wanted them.

When the time came for the cave-festival, the stepmother went, leaving the girl to keep watch over the fruit-trees in the garden. She waited till the stepmother was some way off, and then went herself, wearing a cloak of stuff spun from kingfisher feather and shoes of gold. Her stepsister recognized her and said to the stepmother, "That's very like my sister." The stepmother suspected the same thing. The girl was aware of this and went away in such a hurry that she lost one shoe. It was picked up by one of the people of the cave. When the stepmother got home, she found the girl asleep, with her arms round one of the trees in the garden, and thought no more about it.

This cave was near to an island in the sea. On this island was a kingdom called T'o-han. Its soldiers had subdued twenty or thirty other islands and it had a coastline of several thousand leagues. The cave-man sold the shoe in T'o-han, and the ruler of T'o-han got it. He told those about him to put it on; but it was an inch too small even for the one among them that had the smallest foot. He ordered all the women in his kingdom to try it on; but there was not one that it fitted. It was light as down and made no noise even when treading on stone. The king of T'o-han thought the cave-man had got it unlawfully. He put him in prison and tortured him, but did not end by finding out where it had come from. So he threw it down at the wayside. (Here the text is corrupt, and the tale becomes unclear.) Then they went everywhere through all the people's houses and arrested them. If there was a woman's shoe, they arrested them and told the king of T'o-han. He thought it strange, searched the inner-rooms and found Yeh-hsien. He made her put on the shoes, and it was true.

Yeh-hsien then came forward, wearing her cloak spun from halcyon feathers and her shoes. She was as beautiful as a heavenly being. She now began to render service to the king, and he took the fish-bones and Yeh-Hsien, and brought them back to his country. The stepmother and stepsister were shortly afterwards struck by flying stones, and died. The cave people were sorry for them and buried them in a stone-pit, which was called the Tomb of the Distressed Women. The men of the cave made mating-offerings there; any girl they prayed for there, they got. The king of T'o-han, when he got back to his kingdom, made Yeh-Hsien his chief wife. The first year the king was very greedy and by his prayers to the fish-bones got treasure and jade without limit. Next year, there was no response, so the king buried the fish-bones on the sea-shore. He covered them with a hundred bushels of pearls and bordered them with gold. Later there was a mutiny of some soldiers who had been conscripted and their general opened (the hiding-place) in order to make better provision for his army. One night they (the bones) were washed away by the tide.

This story was told me by Li Shih-yuan, who has been in the service of my family a long while. He was himself originally a man from the caves of Yung-chou and remembers many strange things of the South.

Appendix B: The Zhuang Story of "Bubo": Yexian and "Manu and the Fish"

An episodic long story of "Bubo" labeled a "Zhuang Myth from Guangxi Province" concerning a thunder god and a flood is translated by Guo Xu, Lucien Miller, and Xu Kun from a version originally published in *Zhuangzu minjian gushi xuan*, vol.1, 1982, 8-19, collector and redactor: Lan Hongen (Han) (Miller 1995). The story has ties to the fish subplot of the Yexian text, not to the elements most associated in the West with the "Cinderella"

story: there is no stepmother, stepsister, neglected child, festival, animal, supernatural helper, shoe, dress, or royal marriage. This is primarily a male story with a male thunder god, a male headman called Bubo trying to control the god, and a pair of children, with the son receiving slightly more attention than the daughter, although they act in unison.

What is most germane in the story comes at the end: "When the Dragon King had his beard pulled out, he ran back into the lake. Since then, his children have only two scraps of beard on their faces. You've all seen carp, haven't you? Don't they have two little beards?" (Miller 1995:150). The story of small carp growing into the water Dragon King therefore appears to be well known to the Zhuang. The story takes place in a watery world, where Bubo tries to bring rain to his fields, crops, and cattle, but ends by causing a catastrophic flood instead.

This flood myth reinforces the interpretation of the Yexian story that a "flood" rather than a "tide" wipes away the gold and pearls, and also supports the legitimacy of comparing the Yexian story to the Hindu "Manu and the Fish." The survivors of the Bubo flood are the two children whom the Thunder God spares "to repay you for kindly saving my life." The boy and his sister escape in a boat cleverly made from a large gourd. The reciprocal act of rescue defines both "Manu and the Fish" and the Yexian story (and separates the story from that of Noah, who does not first rescue "God"). The two children (after a few objections that sound modern) marry. Their child is a fleshball with no eyes, mouth, hands, or feet. Once minced up as a monster, the pieces become the world's men and women. I would compare this Zhuang egg-like homunculus with the P'an Ku creation myth that Anne Birrell states "originated in south-west [China] and is probably of non-Chinese origin" (1993:307).

The Zhuang description of the Thunder God ties him to other Asian gods. He "had a pair of wings on his back" and carries a "broad ax and a chisel," and with these he goes around "splitting and cutting, whenever his anger flared" (137). The Thunder God in Japan is called Raijin. Raijin is a widely popular Japanese figure and has humorous aspects like his character in this Zhuang story. In Japan's Sanjusangendo Temple there is a thirteenth-century statue that includes Raijin figured clutching a hammer with the talons of a bird attached to human arms and legs. The statue (along with a wind god) is described in the following way in the temple's literature: "These two gods are based on Hindu deities (Skt. = Vayu and Varun) and Chinese deities (Fengshe 風神 and Leigong 雷公) (http://www.aisf.or.jp/~jaanus/deta/f/fuujinraijin.htm).

The Zhuang story explains that Bubo swipes off the feet of the Thunder God, and that the Thunder God replaces them with chicken feet and keeps on stomping around; this resembles Raijin's feet. While the notes in Miller's book say that "Leiwang" is "absent from both Han and other southwestern minority cultures, the god of thunder is a semidivine, semihuman ancestor of the Zhuang" (1995:150), he is known in Chinese folklore as the Thunder God Leigong. Leigong has a hammer and a chisel and is sometimes described as a woodcutter; he splits wood by hitting the metal chisel, a sound resembling thunder.

How does this story of Bubo support the interpretations of the c. 850 Yexian story offered in this article? 1) It reinforces the conclusion that the Yexian story is deeply concerned with morality; in both cases a usurping, greedy landlord class is punished while ordinary, spontaneously compassionate children are rewarded. 2) In both cases, in the ninth and twentieth centuries, the collector as redactor is "Han" Chinese; there is veiled satire in the stories. 3) The flood in "Bubo" reinforces the interpretation that Yexian derives from the "Manu and the Flood" story because both have the motifs of a small carp that grows into a large water Dragon King; this is a Hindu story because there is no small fish/large fish motif in Noah. 4) The similarities between the Zhuang "Bubo" story and the Yexian story also support the conclusion that the Yexian story is a product of the Zhuang. Zhuang people have adapted Hindu stories that have entered their territory so that it is difficult to see the Hindu origin; in other words, it is a Hindu story told by a non-Hindu.

Appendix C

The following is a summary of reasons for concluding that the Yexian story reflects Tang Dynasty Zhuang creativity, culture, and interaction with other cultures (Hindu, Buddhist, and Han Chinese literary traditions). My investigations support the hypothesis that Duan Chengshi's statement that he received the story from a member of a tribal community of Nanning is accurate and not fictional. The reasons 1-7 below summarize why the informant should be considered Zhuang.

1. The c. 850 text says that the storyteller Li Shiyuan was from Nanning. Since the Tang Dynasty, the Zhuang have been the great majority of the ethnic peoples in and around Nanning and in Guangxi Province. (The proportion of Zhuang to any other single minority ethnic group in Guangxi is now roughly thirteen million to ten thousand.)
2. The collector Duan lived in and near Nanning for periods of his life.
3. Because of Han Chinese dominance in Nanning by the Tang Dynasty, it is logical that the Han Chinese collector would have a servant who was of the subordinated minority group.
4. There is a cluster of related arguments about the term "cave-dweller" used to describe Li Shiyuan, Yexian, and Yexian's father; Waley and Mair agree that the term means a tribal or aborigine group; Barlow explicitly (and independently) says the Chinese character "cave" was confused with the term used for Zhuang native settlements.
5. The term Zhuang has been used for Tai speakers and there is evidence in the story of linguistic terms from the Tai language group, according to Mair.
6. The Zhuang associate themselves (linguistically, culturally, and politically) with some minority groups (Nong/ Nung) in Vietnam, and Vietnam has been cited as a source of the "Cinderella" story since Cox's nineteenth-century world research. Vietnamese versions have also been emphasized by the Chinese scholar Ting. As noted, South Vietnam had a temple dedicated to Valmiki in the seventh century; Northern Vietnam considered itself the kingdom of Dasaratha, Rama's father (Desai 1970:9).
7. In addition to all these factors, the Zhuang scholars in Nanning claimed the story as their own and emphasized the blue clothing, women's traditions courting with shoes, fishbones placed in a bowl, and so on. They took great pride in the story. (I should add here that a group of six guides, who identified themselves as Han Chinese from Guangxi Province, when asked about the Yexian story in 2007 and shown a picture book with the text in Chinese, all said they had never heard of the story, even from Disney's version.)

A main point of my paper, however, is that in analyzing evidence that ultimately supports Duan's statement that the storyteller was from an ethnic group native to Nanning, and that the group is Zhuang, I am not saying the Yexian story was produced by uniquely "Zhuang" customs, beliefs, traditions, narratives, and history. Instead, my main point is that the story draws upon Zhuang, Hindu, Buddhist, and Han Chinese elements. 1) The Zhuang had absorbed Han Chinese culture for many centuries by the ninth century, and the story also reflects that the Han Chinese Duan Chengshi wrote the story down. 2) The Zhuang, with their links to related groups in Vietnam, were well positioned to transform Hindu narratives, specifically the *Ramayana,* which we know was revered in North and South Vietnam in the seventh century. 3) In the ninth century, Zhuang were also in an area where Buddhist stories of the Guanyin Bodhisattva inspired ritual practice. Regardless of these influences, the story is Zhuang in the same way a Shakespeare play is English even though it may draw upon Greek, Roman, Celtic, or French sources and traditions. The Yexian story itself is not Hindu or Buddhist, even though I believe its greatest value is that of compassion; it is a secular story that does not explain occurrences with reference to any religious system.

I. Hindu

A. Motifs and plot coming from the Hindu *Ramayana:*

1. A father's second wife mistreats the first wife's first child, who is the protagonist.
2. A child of the second wife is unfairly preferred.
3. The protagonist lives in a state of exile marked by tattered clothing.
4. The protagonist is moved to despair.
6. Supernatural animal helpers intervene.
7. The protagonist is identified through a talisman.
8. A royal wedding/ascension to throne resolves the story.

B. Motifs and plot coming from "Manu and the Fish":

1. Hero saves fish.
2. Fish grows immense.
3. Fish saves hero.
4. Flood happens.
5. Bad people are destroyed.

II. Han Chinese words/concepts

A. Words/concepts likely to be attributed to Duan Chengshi's recording of the story:

1. Identification of the storyteller as a "servant."
2. "Before the Qin and the Han" used in "Peach Blossom Spring," and so on.
2. "Cave-dweller" used to signify a non-Han Chinese ethnic group.
3. "Kingfisher" used to describe a blue color and/or draw upon the Han storytelling tradition of neglected/mistreated beautiful women being compared to a bird.
4. "Golden" used as a color or thread; confused with "gold shoes," where the entire shoe can be thought to be made of the metal.
5. Language indicates that the foot is uniquely small.
6. Gaps in the story make transitions seem magical.

B. Other Han beliefs:

1. The Yang Guifei story, with strong "kingfisher" motif, features rivalries at court and a woman who becomes the primary wife of an emperor.
2. Red is a Chinese lucky color; carp and red carp become lucky in Han tradition.
3. In one story the Yangzi River sturgeon going upstream are symbols of perseverance.
4. Tang Dynasty Emperor "Li" forbade the eating of red carp because of Han Chinese linguistic confusion regarding the character for "li."

5. Raising goldfish became a widespread Han activity (after the Tang Dynasty, however).
6. Stories surface in the Han Chinese *Journey to the West* of a small red fish who is or becomes a water dragon; there is also a story of a monkey who is supposed to guard fruit trees.

III. Buddhist Contributions

A. Buddhist Jataka stories:

1. Bodhisattva (or Buddha) enters an animal.
2. An ordinary person reveals compassion (moral goodness) by saving the animal.
3. A person is saved and others are summarily punished by various methods, including stoning.
4. A good person is revealed as a bodhisattva.
5. The form is short and in prose.
6. If the *Ramayana* story was available as a Jataka story ("Sandals of a King"), then other Jataka stories were also likely to be available to the storyteller, who could be either Zhuang or Han Chinese.

B. Buddhist practices surfacing in South China after c. 850 date of Yexian story:

1. Ponds of Mercy appear where small red fish are released to gain merit.
2. The feminine Guanyin (Bodhisattva) is associated with Ponds of Mercy and with women's wishes for healthy children.
3. "Fishbasket Guanyin" is associated with the Lotus Sutra and with a story where a woman wishes for a "good husband" and gets her wish.

C. Buddhist beliefs that were strong in China during the Tang Dynasty:

1. Lotus Sutra tells a parable where the Sea Dragon King's daughter achieves enlightenment. This is a striking departure from other Hindu attitudes toward women. (Also, like Jataka, this is spreading faith through storytelling.)
2. Status of women in general was higher during the Tang Dynasty than at any other time in Chinese history. This is often ascribed to influences from Central Asian ethnic groups rather than Zhuang influence. Uighurs, for example, were Buddhist during the Tang Dynasty.

III. Zhuang Contributions

A. Motifs:

1. *Red Fish.* The Zhuang specifically learned how to raise red Oujiang Carp in the Tang Dynasty; the practices in the terraced wet rice fields was a significant contribution to their ability to survive. This happened in Guangxi Province. (Note: The fish in "Manu and the Fish" is not red.)
2. *Fish bones*
a. The Zhuang fertilize the rice terraces with fishbones.

b. The Zhuang burial practice is to collect the bones of their dead after three years and put them in urns.
(Note: Fishbones are not mentioned in Manu story; the fish explicitly is alive and well at the end of the story.)
3. *Blue Dress*
a. The Zhuang in or near Nanning pride themselves in producing an iridescent blue dye, and it is the signature color for their distinctive clothing.
(Note: No other tradition—Hindu, Buddhist, or Han—tells a story where a woman's dress marks her transformation/ triumph).
b. Zhuang women are well known for creative and skilled embroidery and brocade.
4. *Slippers*
a. Zhuang women make slippers that fit their own feet; these have soft soles yet are stiff.
b. Slippers are embroidered/decorated with gold thread.
c. Zhuang courting rituals involve shoes (other minority groups in Guangxi also have courting games where a man matches one shoe with another that the woman owns).
(Note: The shoes in the *Ramayana* are usually translated as sandals, a type of shoe that does not work in a story that pivots on a tightly-fitted closed shoe. One should also note that the fetish of small feet and the practice of foot-binding surfaces in China *after* the Tang Dynasty.
5. *Festival*
a. The driving desire of the woman in the story is to go to the festival. Many minority groups in Guangxi and elsewhere have large, significant festivals where men and women mingle.
b. The desire to go to a festival in beautiful clothing is not from the *Ramayana,* any Jataka story, or any Han Chinese story that I have encountered.

B. Underlying Zhuang values:

a. Women were valued for being artistically creative and for standing up to domineering authority (*Third Sister Liu*, myths about brocade).
b. The beauty of the natural world is revered. Yexian's fish has not only red fins, but also golden eyes. She responds to beauty; she is rewarded for spontaneously protecting the natural world.
c. Marriage between two people is desired as a primary source for happiness; wanting a wife primarily for economic reasons is wrong.
d. Satire through language—wit, humor, inventiveness, criticism—is valued (song contests).